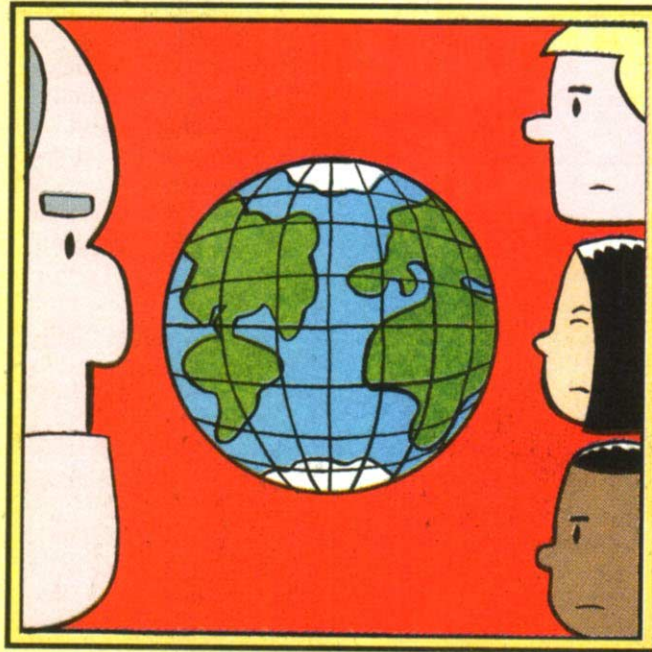


WHY HITCHENS MATTERS • WHO'S ON THE NO-FLY LIST?

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 23, 2002



WHO ARE THE **Real Globalizers?**

Naomi Klein • David Graeber

CORPORATE CULTURE IN **The Age of Enron**

Barbara Ehrenreich • Thomas Frank • Saskia Sassen • Laura S. Washington

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 27, No. 2) went to press on November 22 for newsstand sales December 9 to December 23, 2002.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions, address changes and back issues** call (800) 827-0270.

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Editorial

A Kinder, Gentler GOP

After the Democrats' poor showing on Election Day, the party establishment has tried to cover its ass and pin a happy face on the donkey.

The Republican triumph "was tactical rather than ideological," said Terry McAuliffe, the Democratic National Committee chairman and gifted fundraiser.

After all, were he to admit that the Democrats' failure was due to a deficit of inspiring ideas, that would not reflect well on the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which since its founding in 1985 has come to control the party apparatus and the party's money spigot, though not necessarily in that order.

But while the DLC says the Democrats' loss has nothing to do with ideology, at the same time they claim the party needs to abandon ideology all together, or at least one kind of ideology.

"The left in the party and the interest groups in the party always want to push the party toward their direction," said Al From, the DLC executive director. "Moving left is counterproductive."

Instead, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, From advised the Democrats to court "swing voters in the political center" who are "white, politically moderate, loosely tied, if at all, to a political party, live in the suburbs, and work in nonunion jobs."

Once it was clear that Nancy Pelosi and "the Jurassic Park wing of the House Caucus" were in the majority, the DLC admonished the House Democrats for being "many notches to the left of other national groups of Democratic elected officials" and therefore "less likely to understand how to deal with issues that affect swing voters' perceptions of Democrats."

The DLC's advice to Pelosi and the other House leaders: "In guiding the House Caucus, they should heed the 'No Left Turn' signs just ahead."

So just what is the ideology of these so-called New Democrats who are so intent on capturing that "vital center"? What is this so-called moderate course that the DLC is trying to pursue? It is a charade. The New Democrats are hiding their pro-corporate ideology behind discussions of political strategy.

From puts it this way: "Democrats need to get the big things right. That means national security and the economy."

The DLC leadership has supported President Bush's crusade against Iraq. In the House, most of the New Democrats voted for military adventure—while the majority of old-fashioned Democrats voted against the war resolution.

On the economy, the DLC argues that the Democrats should respond to Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy with their own package of cuts. What about a proposal of targeted tax increases on the very rich? According to From, the Democratic Party must reconnect with its real tradition "of economic growth and opportunity, not redistribution." In the same vein, the DLC has praised Bush for opposing the use of trade sanctions to gain international enforcement of labor rights.

In other words, the New Democratic vision is nothing but a kinder, gentler version of the GOP.

The DLC's greatest success is not that it has captured the center, but that it has been allowed to define what the center is. (When the *New York Times* speaks of the DLC, it often employs the adjective "moderate.") For the DLC, and much of the national media, the center has become an exalted ideology-free zone where pragmatists—and corporations—rule undisturbed by concerns about social, economic or environmental justice.

"In guiding the House Caucus, they should heed the 'No Left Turn' signs just ahead."

And that points to the problems of accepting the terms "left" and "right" as if they continue to be useful dichotomies in current public discourse. After all, move too far from the center, in either direction, and you are on the fringe and therefore irrelevant.

Progressives would do better to stake out positions that are not about left and right, but about right and wrong. After all, universal health care, an end to poverty, a system of public schools that educate everyone, environmental policies that sustain life, the fair sharing of our nation's wealth, a world where war is not the only option, and the idea that human values should take precedence over marketplace values are notions that, if well communicated, could transcend ideological labels and at the same time capture and define a moral center.

—Joel Bleifuss

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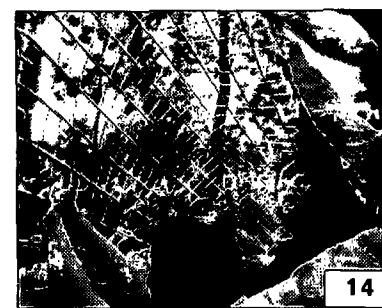
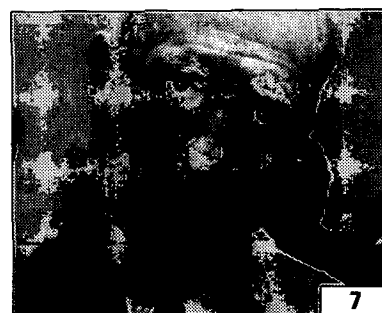
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By Kari Lydersen

Eric Drooker's *Blood Song*.

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Terry LaBan



Taking Heat

It was wonderful to read Ana Marie Cox's frank questions about the current direction of left-wing protests ("They Doth Protest Too Much," November 11). I hope we read more from her, despite criticism she will no doubt face for daring to ask if the old ways really work. *In These Times* will take heat, too, for not simply serving as a cheerleader for any gathering of more than 100 people that calls itself "left."

Leaders of the anti-war movement may say that the anti-World Bank protests that Cox comments on are irrelevant. I suspect the same questions may apply to these new anti-war stirrings. Yes, the movement is growing, but does it have a sound basis? Let us hope it has some short-run impact.

G. William Domhoff
Santa Cruz, California

Ana Marie Cox calls upon us to "stop mocking the Black Bloc and start making them seem less representative" in order to "disarm critics who prefer to debate caricatures rather than ideas." I'm curious to know what steps Cox has taken toward that end—other than to get paid by the word to invent caricatures every bit as broad as the ones she would have us believe the protesters are making of the issues?

I'm also interested to know if she has been talking to people who are actually out there protesting. Or does she glean everything she knows about them from the car window during her morning commute and publications like the *Washington City Paper*, which was obviously cashing in on the entertainment value of the protests. And isn't that what *In These Times* is doing publishing Cox's piece of "insular and self-congratulatory" op-ed fluff?

It is she who has the power to "alienate large chunks of a potentially sympathetic populace" by this liberal in-fighting that she has chosen to pursue.

Joe Egnot
Austin, Texas

No Response

I wanted so much to respond to Geov Parrish's article on the anti-war movement ("New Blood," November 11), but I haven't the heart. War is a foregone conclusion and will unleash another round of atrocities the American public will ignore—as they have the hundreds of other atrocities committed in our name over the past 50 years.

As long as the Doe family is catching up with the Jones family, the national security state will ensure business as usual continues. As long as checks and balances in government are forgotten, corporations are not required to pay their share in taxes, lobbyists have more pull than consumers, and citizens have abandoned their responsibilities, we can expect the defense industry to do exactly what it wants.

Richard Waters
Reno, Nevada

Aaron's Way Off

Salim Muwakkil's otherwise informative article on the iconoclastic Aaron McGruder is marred by McGruder's quoted insistence that whites and Asians can't progress hip-hop ("Aaron's Way," October 28). Blacks don't own hip-hop any more than David Stern does the game of basketball. Figures like Tiger Woods, Dave Brubeck, Spike Lee and McGruder himself were able to successfully challenge the racial norms of their respective professions precisely because professions and cultures aren't owned, they're made—and perpetually reinvented by newcomers and old veterans alike.

All art involves some form of imitation; the trick has always been to transcend that imitation. That said, McGruder's larger point that black hip-hop artists have become culturally stagnant is provocative but misleading. How can one say "all hip-hop sucks" when acts like The Roots, Common, Black Star, MC Solaar and Dilated Peoples are ably filling out the cultural terrain? When youth from places as diverse

as South Korea, Japan, France and Mexico are tuning in and turning out their own local underground acts? The truth is that hip-hop is indeed progressing—only in ways and in places McGruder apparently either doesn't approve of or have the time and inclination to check out.

To his credit, McGruder's cartoons and political commentaries raise serious questions that America should be asking itself instead of moralizing about war and the axis of evil. Such is the task of satire, after all.

Kevin Y. Kim
New York

Puppy Love

I am terribly disappointed in your decision to consider the shelter puppies fed to a snake more appalling than the dozens of genocidal campaigns against humans across the world, the countless stories of rape and abuse, spooky surveillance technology or prison conditions that unfold daily ("Appall-o-Meter," October 28). What it says to me—and probably to many of your other readers—is that you would prefer to see a human child starve or to be blown to bits by a land mine than have a puppy die for any reason.

Your decision to slate this particular story as a perfect 10 reflects badly on your magazine; it does little to improve the popular image of the left as a pack of irrational bleeding hearts unable to incorporate immediate, practical concerns into its arguments.

Miranda L. Tarrow
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Terry LaBan



THE DEMOCRATS, 2002: MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROADKILL

Save the Whales

Enviros win round one against the LFA sonar

By Christine Keyser

SAN FRANCISCO—Environmentalists have won the first legal round in their campaign to block the U.S. Navy from blasting a new high-intensity sonar system—as loud as the Space Shuttle at take-off—throughout the world's oceans. On October 31, Judge Elizabeth LaPorte granted a preliminary injunction sought by five environmental groups against immediate use of the Low Frequency Active (LFA) sonar system. The LFA system would likely violate federal law and harm whales, dolphins and other marine life that depend on hearing for their survival.

The Navy claims the LFA sonar, which it plans to deploy in 75 percent of the world's oceans, is needed to detect "silent" enemy submarines at great distances and intercept them from creeping up undetected on U.S. coastlines. There are currently 224 submarines from non-allied nations "prowling the world's oceans," the Navy's Web site says, which are "quieter and more deadly than ever before."

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) this summer issued the Navy a permit allowing it to "harass marine mammals" while operating two ships equipped with the LFA sonar system, a towed array of 18 underwater speakers attached to each ship. The active sonar emits low-frequency signals at up to 215 decibels. In granting the permit, NMFS accepted the Navy's own environmental review, which determined the LFA sonar would have a negligible impact on endangered species and other marine life.

In August, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Humane Society and three other environmental groups filed suit against NMFS and the Navy. They charged that the Navy failed to conduct valid scientific studies on the potential impacts to marine mammals,

who depend on their own sonar systems to echolocate and find their food sources in the oceans.

Mass strandings and deaths of whales and dolphins occurred in the Bahamas in 2000 and the Canary Islands this September when active sonar systems were deployed by the Navy and NATO. Autopsies revealed that the animals had ruptured eardrums and internal bleeding. "From a scientific point of view, there is very little question that, given the right set of circumstances, active sonar can kill marine life," says Naomi Rose, a

and far-traveling LFA sonar," the judge wrote. "They have also shown the possibility, indeed probability, of irreparable injury."

However, the judge ruled that the Navy had legitimate national security interests in using the system, and must be allowed to use it in time of war and to test and train with it beforehand. The judge directed the Navy and environmental groups to sit down with a federal mediator and map out biologically sensitive areas of the oceans that would be off-limits to the sonar and areas where testing would cause the least harm to whales and

other endangered species. On November 14, the Navy agreed to restrict testing of the sonar to about 1 million square miles of the Pacific near the Mariana Islands, an area scientists believe does not contain marine mammals or other endangered species. The Navy originally had planned to deploy LFA sonar across about 14 million square miles of the north Pacific by the end of next summer.

Environmentalists hope they will prevail against the Navy when the case comes to trial next June. However, given the current climate in Washington, they fear the Bush administration and Republican-controlled Congress will intercede and

exempt the Navy and the rest of the military from environmental laws on grounds of national security. "The scuttlebutt we've heard from within the Navy is that this is a precedent case," says Mark Palmer, co-director of Earth Island Institute's International Marine Mammal Project. "They look on it as, if we succeed in stopping LFA sonar on sound pollution, environmentalists will go after them on any other ocean sounds they do."

There is much speculation about why the Navy wants to deploy the costly and controversial LFA Sonar system anyway. There is scant military threat from submarines after the demise of the Soviet Union, and the Navy has two passive sonar systems in use that do not impact marine life. "Frankly, they shouldn't even be testing it," says Palmer. "They should just turn the whole thing off and look at passive sonar systems that don't cause harm." ■



The Navy's new sonar system could kill.

marine mammal scientist with the Humane Society.

Joel Reynolds, senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, notes that NMFS granted the Navy only a "small take permit," which is restricted to activities that would cause the deaths of only a small number of marine mammals in a specified area. Deployment of LFA Sonar over 75 percent of the world's oceans, as the Navy is prepared to do over time, would threaten countless numbers of marine mammals throughout the seas.

Judge LaPorte agreed, ruling that the environmentalists would likely prevail in their claim the NMFS permit violates federal laws intended to protect marine life: the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. "It is undisputed that marine mammals ... will at a minimum be harassed by the extremely loud

Criminal Neglect

Death stalks the *maquiladoras*

By Laurence Pantin

MEXICO CITY—More than 280 women have been found dead in the Mexican border town of Ciudad Juárez over the past decade, almost half in brutal murders that remain unsolved.

As the number of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez continues to rise, an international human rights commission has held its second hearing on the issue.

On October 18, representatives of the Mexican government appeared before the the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a branch of the Organization of American States, to explain their failure to find and prosecute the perpetrators and prevent more women from dying. Just two days after the hearing, what seemed to be the remains of another woman were found half-buried on a secondary road near Juárez, in the state of Chihuahua, adding to four others discovered in the past month.

"The government is saying they're doing something about it, but in the meantime, women keep dying," says Ximena Andión, lawyer for the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights.

Although police have yet to confirm the age or identity of the latest body, the circumstances of its discovery and the women's clothes detected on the scene seem to indicate the woman may be one more victim of the homicides that have plagued Ciudad Juárez since 1993.

Because of a lack of statistical information from Mexican police, it is difficult to say exactly how many women have been murdered here. Yet Rosario Acosta, founder of May Our Daughters Return Home, a Juárez-based association gathering relatives of the missing and assassinated women, estimates that 284 bodies have been discovered and that many more women are missing.

Most of these women were beaten or raped before being killed, and about 110 of the victims were found tortured or mutilated. Their deaths are considered serial murders by the state attorney general's office. Motives for the deaths are

unclear—since most of the killings remain unsolved—but hypotheses range from drug or organ trafficking to prostitution or snuff movies.

Activists say a pattern of neglect has characterized state and local investigations into the murders. Only one man has been convicted for the murder of a woman in Juárez; his sentence was later suspended because of irregularities during the trial. A dozen more suspects have been arrested, some of whom have been awaiting trial since 1996. But most of those suspects claim they were tortured and forced to confess.

In addition, a 1998 report by the Mexican National Human Rights Commission, based on analysis of police files, denounced the lack of serious investigation into the crimes by local authorities. According to the government agency's report, some files were missing crucial information, such as pictures of the corpse that could lead to later identification. In other cases, the police's determination of the cause of the death did not correspond to forensic reports. "Irregularities keep happening in the investigations," Andión says. One of the latest bodies to be discovered was initially identified as a woman already found dead last November.

Most of the victims were very young, and 80 percent worked in *maquiladoras*, Acosta adds. "They were poor and vulnerable women," from risky parts of the city without safe public transportation or paved and lighted streets. "It seems justice in our state is designed to be inaccessible to poor people," she says.

Last November, Andión's group, along with 300 civil organizations, asked the Inter-American Commission to review the unsolved murders in Ciudad Juárez. The commission held a first hearing on the case last March. As a result, the Mexican government promised to implement a number of proposals to solve the cases. But the measures seem disproportionately weak in comparison to the problem. "The government ... wants to install working groups to dialogue," says Acosta, "when it's been 10 years of this tragedy."

"There's no real political will to do something that really puts an end to the killings and solve the cases," concludes Lidia Alpizar, coordinator of the "Stop the Impunity: No More Killings!" campaign. "And in the meantime, bodies keep appearing." ■



case, the Maharashtra government approved Enron's massive project—the largest foreign direct investment in all of India—in just 12 days in 1995, despite previously opposing it. When the Dabhol plant was completed, the concerns of protesters and skeptical World Bank economists proved well-founded. The state government quickly found itself unable to pay Enron's inflated costs for power, and in 2001 it pulled out of the agreement entirely.

Because of ECA financing, however, for which the United States was liable, U.S. officials like Secretary of State Colin Powell responded with intense pressure. According to The Associated Press, the United States went so far as to threaten to withhold all aid to India.

ECAs have no poverty-reduction or development mandate. Instead, their purpose, as Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) said recently of the Export-Import Bank, is "naked corporate welfare." In addition, the institutions play a vital role in underwriting morally dubious industries. Support for arms exports accounted for half of England's ECA portfolio in 2000-2001.

Fourteen of the 19 nuclear power plants currently under construction in the developing world benefit from ECA financing.

ECAs bear similar responsibility for exacerbating Third World debt and global warming. In a recent forum, the Philippines' Freedom from Debt Coalition stressed that ECAs hold almost half of the developing world's debt to creditors. And fossil fuel, oil and gas projects backed in the '90s by U.S. ECAs, writes Aaron Goldzimer of Environmental Defense, "will release 29.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide over their lifetimes, roughly equal to an entire year of all global carbon dioxide emissions."

Such abuses fuel opposition from environmental and public-interest groups. In the United States, activists are using required congressional reauthorizations as opportunities to publicize ECA misdeeds. Earlier this year, legislators approved the expansion of Export-Import Bank activity despite a challenge led by Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont). "Eighty percent of Ex-Im money goes to Fortune 500 companies," Sanders pointed out at the time, including Boeing, General Electric, Enron,

IBM and Halliburton. "Amazingly," he added, "these companies are some of the biggest job cutters in the country."

The next battle will involve OPIC, which comes up for reauthorization in 2003. Already, groups like the AFL-CIO, Oxfam and Friends of the Earth have called for higher standards to address rampant corruption, environmental destruction and worsening labor conditions among the agency's projects.

Ultimately, combating ECAs must be an international endeavor. In May 2000, 347 NGOs from 46 countries signed the Jakarta Declaration against ECAs. The coordinated efforts of this network have already succeeded in stopping the Ilisu Dam in Turkey, which threatened to displace a primarily Kurdish population of 78,000.

Campaigners realize they will need a much larger public campaign to break through the international stonewalling they have encountered. But Goldzimer stresses the potential for activist pressure. "What the ECAs do is indefensible," he says. "This is low-hanging fruit. Governments have not been properly shamed." ■

(((((((((((APPALL-O-METER)))))))))))

Victory Lap **3.7**

An advertisement on the back cover of the November 4 *Weekly Standard* invites well-heeled lovers of liberty to "relive [an] exciting chapter in American history" on the "Freedom Cruise" to the Caribbean island of Grenada. It goes on to mention that former international man of mystery Oliver North, ex-Attorney General Ed Meese and NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre will be aboard to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our nation's stunning victory over the formidable Grenadan left. The 1983 invasion dealt a blow to Red overlordship in the region and guaranteed subpar medical students access to an expensive offshore education.

Gnome Justice, **1.8** Gnome Peace

Police in southwest France have discovered more than 100 garden gnomes believed to have

been kidnapped. Agence France-Presse reports that a mushroom hunter stumbled upon a gathering of the gnomes in the middle of a pine forest south of Bordeaux. "It was very nice to look at," the local police chief said of the circular arrangement of the gnomes. "Very tastefully done."

Police are trying to identify the owners of the gnomes. So far there are no suspects, but an organization known as the Gnome Liberation Front has declared a terror campaign against "oppressors and enslavers" of the tiny clay creatures.

You've Got Evil! **3.9**

You'll know you're in trouble when you find something in your in box from udaysaddamhussein@yahoo.com or babil@uruklink.net—the e-mail addresses of a certain Middle Eastern

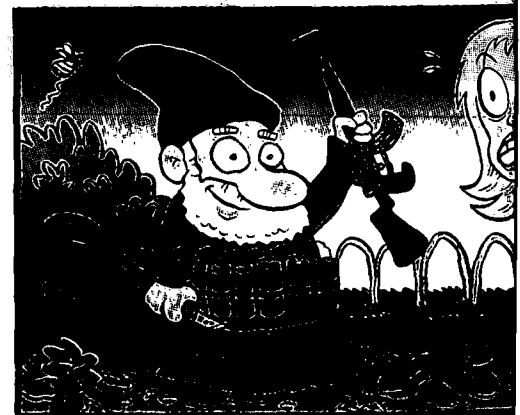
strongman's charming spawn. According to *Wired* magazine, Uday, son of Saddam, used the latter address to e-mail this bouquet to a British journalist: "We have been able to allocate your current residency. ... Our brave (young) agents are able to stop people like you in the time and the place that we will determine."

Some observers argue that

Yahoo! should not supply a free e-mail account to a person whom the U.S. State Department accuses of murder, torture, rape and smuggling. "It is against U.S. law to provide services to residents of Iraq, even if it is a free account,"

said a spokesman for the U.S. Treasury Department. "The provider should cut off the account."

Another school of thought argues, why cut it when you can snoop? As it turns out, both Uday and his dad had easily crackable passwords on their free accounts. Still, the only intelligence agents have been able to glean from Uday's in box is that he could add inches to his penis by taking a miraculous new pill.



Don't Drink the Water

Cuban embargo hits new low

By Patrick Michael Rucker

HAVANA—According to the U.S. embargo, what can't Americans do in Cuba? Pick one: (a) sell booze; (b) compete in a dance contest; (c) provide clean water.

Options (a) and (b) were tested at a landmark trade fair in late September, when about 300 American vendors sold nearly \$92 million in food products, including wine and spirits, to Cuban state purchasers, and a little two-step won Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura accolades at a Havana nightclub.

James Sabzali could have joined the fun but for a federal conviction involving choice (c). He and his employer, Philadelphia-based Bro-Tech, were convicted last April of selling water purification resins to Cuba. That, according to the embargo, is a no-no.

Since the embargo was enacted 42 years ago, American business has gotten to the island in the same manner that Cuban refugees get off—with some nerve and a lot of luck. But American policy toward Cuba has grown more permissive in recent years, and the businesses that once circled the island have begun to swoop.

For advocates of a tough Cuba policy, the Sabzali case is an uncomfortable parable of how arbitrary and aimless the embargo has become. Sabzali's misadventure began about 10 years ago, when Bro-Tech hired him as its Cuba agent. As a Canadian living in Ontario, Sabzali kept the firm one step removed from its outlaw client.

This was not an original scheme. The embargo is little hindrance for large U.S. corporations, which can shift their goods through overseas, third-party suppliers and distributors. Some of America's most respected companies, such as General Electric, Microsoft, IBM and Coca-Cola, already have a presence in Cuba.

Things ran smoothly for Sabzali until around 1994, when, according to sources close to the case, one of Bro-Tech's Mexican rivals dropped a dime to the Treasury Department. The firm had got-

ten a little greedy by then—the Cuban accounts were mingled in with ordinary sales, and in 1996 Sabzali was transferred to Philadelphia—and a dogged prosecution led to last May's conviction.

Ironically, the successful prosecution damaged the embargo's image. When you next hear a politician talk about the effectiveness of the embargo, think of this: American businesses can already sell medicine, medical equipment and food and agricultural products—including Little Debbie Snack Cakes, horses, plywood and cotton—to Cuba. An American citizen



Cuban President Fidel Castro examines apples and pears grown in America.

wishing to travel to Cuba can do so legally with the slightest pretext of research or cultural interest or, just as easily, flaunt the travel ban with a stop in a third country. Rather than argue that the embargo is a success, Castro-haters would be better served offering proof that it even exists.

The recent Havana trade fair was a triumph for the American interests that won a "food and agriculture" exemption from the embargo two years ago. Standing in a mock-'50s diner kiosk of American agriculture giant and expo sponsor Archer Daniels Midland, Pedro Alvarez, president of the Cuban importing firm Alimport, sealed the purchase of \$9.7 million of rice with ADM chairman G. Allen Andreas. When the contract was signed, Fidel Castro added his own scrawl and pledged, "Now you have my personal guarantee."

These cordial scenes must have enraged Otto Reich, an assistant secretary of state and President Bush's Cuba policy enforcer. But worse is around the bend. Last fall, the House and Senate separately passed two measures to further roll back the Cuban embargo. The first would have effectively repealed the tourist travel ban. The second would have allowed private loans on agricultural sales to Cuba—financing that is so far prohibited.

Next spring should see those anti-embargo measures, and more, making their way to the president's desk. Most disconcerting for the White House, the measures are likely to bear the names of many otherwise-loyal Republicans who have begun to question the wisdom of the embargo.

In the calculus of American foreign policy, the Cuba exponent has a value of exactly zero. Despite the State Department's disingenuous hysterics about a Cuban chemical weapons program or support for terrorists, in the shadow of American military might the Caribbean island is docile as a lamb. The embargo is this administration's guilty indulgence and an extravagant gift to South Florida Cuban exiles.

For their part, "Cubans have grown quite shrewd at how things work in Washington," says Brian Alexander, lobbyist for the anti-embargo Cuba Policy Foundation.

At the advice of American advisers, Cuba has purchased agricultural products from 34 states—an attempt to spread goodwill and win political allies across the country. "Relaxing trade restrictions is a matter for Congress," Alexander explains. "The Cubans understand that, and now members of Congress are going to Washington asking, 'If my constituents can sell soy beans to Cuba, why can't they sell tractors?'"

And in Washington, common sense is beginning to take hold. Arguing for the embargo is a solitary and thankless task made more difficult as the Sabzali case—once an example of the embargo's punch—continues to collapse. One of Sabzali's original co-defendants was plea-bargained, another had his conviction overturned, and Sabzali himself may be acquitted. Either that, or he'll be punished for a crime that will soon cease to exist. ■

Patrick Michael Rucker, author of *This Troubled Land*, is the Financial Times correspondent in Havana.

Wage War

Despite a setback, momentum for a living wage increases

By Kelly Candaele and Peter Dreier

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA—Business groups from across the country poured nearly \$1.5 million into a war chest to oppose Santa Monica's living wage law, resulting on November 5 in a temporary setback for the national movement to lift the working poor out of poverty.

Despite the defeat in Santa Monica—losing by 750 votes out of 26,000 cast (a 51 percent to 49 percent margin)—the living wage movement has a powerful momentum. In the past seven years, more than 90 cities and counties have passed laws requiring companies that do business with the municipal government to pay a “living wage.” As Santa Monica suffered its defeat, New York City passed its first living wage law, and Chicago significantly strengthened its own. Campaigns in about 100 other cities across the country are in progress.

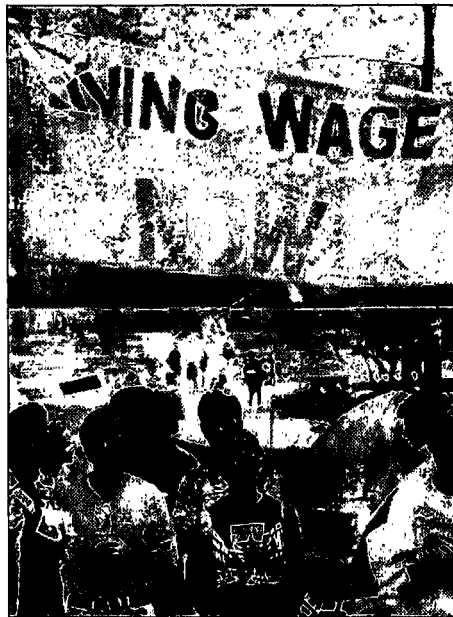
Major national hotel and restaurant chains, along with conservative political forces, viewed Santa Monica as a crucial battleground for stopping the spread of strong living wage laws. The *Wall Street Journal* editorialized before the election that, if passed, the Santa Monica law would become, dangerously, “the model for the nation.” What made the Santa Monica law unique is that it applied to private firms who do not have contracts with or direct subsidies from the city. It raised the stakes.

The law would have improved the pay and benefits for 2,000 employees in the area, requiring businesses that gross more than \$5 million a year within a “coastal zone,” which includes Santa Monica's famous beach and pier, to pay workers at least \$10.50 an hour. If the employer didn't provide health benefits, the minimum pay would have been \$12.25.

A coalition of labor, religious organizations and community groups called Santa Monicans Allied for Responsible Tourism (SMART) conducted an extensive six-week grassroots campaign, with hundreds of volunteers walking precincts and working the phones six days a week. The effort won the support of major community and

religious leaders and top Democratic politicians like Rep. Henry Waxman and state Sen. Sheila Kuehl, as well as 120 economists from around the country.

Living wage opponents, by contrast, had little community support and thus relied on a deluge of deceptive direct mail pieces. The hotel-sponsored campaign culminated with several blatantly misleading slate mailers,



Marching for a decent wage in Boston.

including one implying that top Democratic leaders were urging voters to reject Measure JJ. Waxman and California Democratic Party Chairman Art Torres, who were both pictured in the mailer—titled the “Democratic Voters Ballot Guide”—reiterated their support for Measure JJ in statements released before the election. But the SMART activists lacked the money and time to counteract the disinformation campaign.

The business-backed campaign also cynically appealed to Santa Monicans' generally liberal views by claiming that the living wage proposal “discriminated,” implying the law would treat some Santa Monicans as second-class citizens. Of course, the law did discriminate—in favor of low-wage employees, mostly immigrants, who worked in the city's upscale restaurants and hotels, which rent rooms for more than \$500 a night. A city-sponsored report found that the typical low-wage worker in Santa Monica had a family income of \$20,000 to \$26,000, no health insurance and a 1.5-hour commute.

During the last few days before the election, the business group even hired Latino day laborers to stand at street corners and freeway exits holding “Oppose JJ” signs.

Despite these obstacles, the SMART activists pledged to try again. “This election was not a referendum on the living wage,” says the Rev. Sandie Richards, a longtime leader of Santa Monica's living wage movement, “it was a case study in how far large corporations will go to deny workers a living wage. We know that this community strongly supports the living wage and the right of working people to provide for their families in dignity.”

Nearly 33 million Americans live below the official poverty line—now \$18,104 a year for a family of four—and the nation's poverty rate, 11.7 percent, increased last year for the first time in a decade. The last federal minimum wage increase was in 1997, when it jumped from \$4.75 to \$5.15 an hour. Today, someone working full-time for a minimum wage makes just \$10,712 a year. Every year without a minimum wage increase means that a minimum wage paycheck buys less than it did the year before. In fact, to have the purchasing power it had in 1968, the minimum wage would now have to be more than \$8 an hour.

Because of Congress' failure to act, cities and states have taken matters into their own hands. Last February, voters in New Orleans approved the first-ever city-wide minimum wage—pegged at \$1 over the federal standard—by a margin of 63 percent to 37 percent (a Louisiana court has thrown out the law). Eleven states, including California, have enacted minimum wage laws with thresholds higher than the federal standard. Washington State's law requires its minimum wage—currently at \$6.90 per hour, the highest in the nation—to grow with inflation.

With Republicans now in control in Congress, few political analysts expect to see an increase in the federal minimum wage on the national agenda. But it should certainly be a central plank in the Democrats' alternative agenda as they gear up for the 2004 elections, particularly as the Republicans become increasingly vulnerable on domestic economic issues.

Low wage workers suffered a temporary setback in Santa Monica on Election Day, but the living wage movement—and the broader crusade for raising the wages and hopes of the working poor—continues. ■

DARREN MCCOLLISTER / GETTY

A Flash of Light

Bogaletch Gebre will never forget the day when her aunts led her to the circumciser's hut in their rural village in Ethiopia. The terrified 6-year-old girl cried out in excruciating pain as the rusty knife slashed her genitals, mutilating her young body to bind her to a life of servitude to males. In the background, beyond her own muffled screams, she heard her mother pleading, "I wish they would do away with this!"

Even though other village girls—including her two sisters—had died from infections from female genital mutilation, "we both knew it had to be done to make me a whole woman. It is called 'removing the dirt,' not circumcision," Gebre told a hushed, sold-out auditorium at the Bioneers Conference in the San Francisco Bay Area in October. It was the first time she had ever publicly discussed the personal horror that had shaped her ambition to dedicate her life to the empowerment, education, training and public health of Ethiopian women.

Through her own stubborn determination and the sacrifices of her mother, who took on her household chores, Gebre became the first girl in her village, Zato, to be educated beyond the fourth grade. She attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem on a full scholarship and later became the first woman invited to join the science faculty at Ethiopia's Addis Ababa University. But years earlier, as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Massachusetts, Gebre awakened from her physical and emotional numbness, and she experienced rage and horror over what was done to her as a child.

"I understood the purpose of female genital excision was to excise my mind, excise my ability to live my life with all my senses intact," she says. "I was never meant to be educated, to think for myself, because I am a woman from a small village in Ethiopia. It's a system that looks at woman as an object of servitude. She starts serving her family before she even knows who she is—at the age of six. When she marries, she is literally sold to the highest bidder. From one servitude to another servitude, we are exploited."

Now Gebre—whose first name means "a flash of light"—is determined to ensure that

other Ethiopian girls will have the same opportunities for education and self-fulfillment. "In Ethiopia, we have as much an education famine as a food famine. To finish high school in rural Ethiopia is really like getting a Ph.D. in this country," she says.

In 1997, Gebre founded the Kembatta Women's Self-Help Center-Ethiopia, or KMG, a 7.5-acre women's community in the Kembatta district of Ethiopia where she grew up, located about 260 miles south of the capital, Addis Ababa. "I began to dream of integrating health, livelihood and environment for women," she says. "For once we will see women as a whole people."

To raise funds, she ran five marathon races in Los Angeles. In 1985, she had founded Parents International Ethiopia to raise funds for famine victims; she has now shifted the group's focus to women's public health and education. The European Union funded most of KMG, which includes the first public library in the region and the first "dialogue house" for women to congregate and discuss their concerns.

KMG is establishing community-based health clinics, organizing women's work cooperatives and constructing potable water projects to relieve women of the backbreaking task of carrying water so they will have time to attend school. "Poor women don't like breaks. They like opportunities. Once you give them that they run with it," Gebre says. "They asked us for a library, water, bridge, school, women's center and women's health clinic. When we provide that, they create their own solutions."

KMG also has established legal clinics to teach women their legal rights under Ethiopia's constitution. A growing number of mothers are refusing to allow their daughters to undergo female genital mutilation. Some traditional circumcisers are throwing down

their knives, and young girls are standing up for their rights and saying no.

But a major thrust of KMG's community organizing is to eradicate not just female genital mutilation, but the practice of abducting girls who are then raped if they refuse to marry their captors. The police and courts have often looked the other way, but KMG launched a community-based movement to reverse that intransigence. Since 1999, 10 girls have come forward to charge their abductors, who have been successfully tried and imprisoned.

SCOTT HESS / BIONEERS.ORG



Bogaletch Gebre

"What is good for women is good for the community," Gebre says. "What I discovered in our work is not changing the whole society at once, but to change one person at a time. And it works." ■

KMG can be contacted through Parents International Ethiopia, 213-833-6314, pie.kmg@verizon.net, P.O. Box 7643, Mission Hills, CA 91346; or in Ethiopia at kmg.selfhelp@telecom.net.et, KMG, P.O. Box 13439, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Patriarchy, New and Improved

By Susan J. Douglas

Any feminist, female or male, who has seen ABC's *The Bachelor* was repulsed. For those who have missed this fine media offering, a carefully selected lunk of a guy—in the most recent case, Aaron—is presented with a harem of 25 also carefully selected young women, all slim, all conventionally pretty and most blonde.

After sampling all the wares, he rejects them one by one until he has chosen the one he likes best. It's not unlike a 4-H competition of prize heifers, except the women weigh less and get to go to fancy resorts. Nor is it unlike the inspections in 19th-century slave pens, except that the women are mostly white, privileged and, I'm sorry to report, there of their own free will.

Women who railed against the sexism of the Miss America pageant, TV detective shows and Mr. Clean commercials in the early '70s must not believe what they are seeing. Feminism aside, the notion that anyone would select the person they're going to marry in six weeks of fantasy dates in hot tubs televised to millions of people is creepy.

Nothing from the real world that binds people together or makes them fight like Rottweilers—religion, politics, money, racial attitudes, child-rearing practices, whether you squeeze the toothpaste from the end or the middle—is allowed to enter this fantasy world. Human relationships are depoliticized here, reinforcing the notion that women and marriage are, and should be, outside the realm of citizenship and civic culture.

Worst of all, the show has been a smash among young women. The demographic group most prized by advertisers, women ages 18 to 34, have made *The Bachelor* a huge hit and prompted worries about the survival of its competition over on NBC, *The West Wing*. From dawn till dusk, ABC's chat room has been abuzz with postings from avid fans. So, as a crotchety, 50-something feminist, I want to know what the hell has happened to this generation of young women?

Of course, as soon as I ask that, an admonition I have always raised nags at me: If young women en masse are embrac-

ing a media offering, then we need to figure out why. Just as Madonna in her boy-toy phase and the Spice Girls with their Wonder-Bras and mini-skirts spoke to millions of girls and young women about what has come to be called "girl power," *The Bachelor*'s popularity tells us something about post-feminism and how young



women experience their situations within, yes—I'll use the word—patriarchy.

So I turned to an invaluable source, my teen-age daughter and her friends. My daughter loves the show, and loathes watching it with me, because my stream of invective makes it hard for her to follow what's going on. But here's what I hear these girls saying: They know the show is sexist. (They naively counter that since ABC is going to run *The Bachelorette* in the winter, the network isn't sexist.) Many of them do not find Aaron—an amiable, tall, sandy-haired guy with not much light behind his eyes—all that desirable.

But for them, the show is not about Aaron, it's about the 25 young women. Female viewers see an array of personas, identifying with some and rejecting others, as they calibrate what kind of woman succeeds in a world where appearance and personality still powerfully determine a woman's fate. Helene, the one Aaron finally chose, was enormously popular with young women—the chat room confirms this—because she was cast as "the smart one." Confident, with a sense of humor, Helene was also not overly adulatory of The Man, unlike some of the other contestants. My daughter and her friends did not like the contestants who were wimpy and needy, air-headed, manipulative, untrustworthy, backstabbing or bitchy.

The show, in essence, offers highly normative female "types" into which most women allegedly fall and ropes viewers into damning certain behaviors while applauding others. Thus girls are urged to place themselves on a post-feminist scale of femininity to determine how far they have to go to please men without losing all shreds of their own identity and dignity. In the process, young women calibrate, for better and for worse, what kind of female traits are most likely to ensure success in a male-dominated world.

But Aaron is being judged, too. The show is a metaphor for the persistence—dare I say, desirability—of patriarchy, but in post-feminist clothing. With all of Aaron's faux soul-searching about people needing to be honest and sensitive and not wanting to hurt any woman's feelings, he embodies the lie that patriarchy ain't so bad now because it has been humanized by women.

Viewers tuned in to see if he would confirm girls' worst suspicions that men (and, by extension, a patriarchal system) go for

If millions of young women are embracing *The Bachelor*, we need to figure out why.

superficial qualities and women who stay in their place—or whether he would embody the new and improved sensitive-new-age-guy patriarchy, the kind that supposedly "gets it." His choice of Helene confirms the latter.

Now it is true that many young women loathe this show and find it completely degrading to women. But millions don't. They flock to *The Bachelor* in part because they want to participate in a process that reinforces what kinds of femininity ensure survival, and what kinds do not, in a world still run by men. In so doing, they become complicit in perpetuating an ethic from the '50s: that women be judged first and foremost by their bodies, faces and personality traits, rather than their brains, integrity, courage, talents or, heaven forbid, political convictions. ■

The No-Fly List



TIM BOYLE/GETTY

By Dave Lindorff

If anything is different after 9/11, it's air travel, as passengers endure long lines and extra security checks at airports. For some passengers and would-be passengers, though, air travel has become something much more harrowing, as the Transportation Security Administration targets political activists for harassment.

For months, the TSA, a federal agency established a year ago to protect the nation's transportation system from terrorism, denied it had a blacklist of people to be singled out by security staff for special inspection and questioning. But in mid-November, in an interview with this reporter, spokesman David Steigman acknowledged that the government has "a list of about 1,000 people" who are deemed "threats to aviation" and not allowed on airplanes under any circumstances.

Steigman added that the TSA itself has no guidelines defining who is put on the list, but rather relies on names provided by other federal agencies, such as the FBI, Secret Service or INS. The TSA also has no procedures for people to clear their names and get off the list.

It appears, however, that this is only part of the story. Most of those who have been singled out for special interrogation and searches of their luggage and their persons, at least those who have gone public with their experiences, clearly are not "threats to aviation." Indeed, many have been ardent advocates of nonviolence.

Is a federal agency systematically harassing travelers for their political beliefs?

Consider the experience of John Dear, a 43-year-old Jesuit priest, member of the Catholic peace group Pax Christi and former executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith global peace organization. "I fly just about every week," Dear says. "Since 9/11, I've been taken aside at the boarding gate every single time and searched and questioned."

He describes one particularly disturbing experience. "I got to the Southwest Airlines gate at the San Jose airport, on my way to Los Angeles, but as soon as the attendant saw my

boarding pass, he shouted, "You can't be here. You have to be searched!"

"Everyone's jaws dropped, and all the passengers backed away from me," he recalls. The flight was delayed while Dear was taken aside and minutely searched, with more than 100 passengers looking on nervously.

Others, like the Green Party's Nancy Oden, have reported being detained by armed soldiers, or, like Green Party leader Doug Stuber, questioned by Secret Service agents, sometimes at such length that they missed their flights. In most cases, they ultimately were permitted to fly to their destinations.

Asked if such people are considered "threats to aviation,"

"What they are doing is harassing people who are opposing the war and publicly speaking out against administration policy."

Steigman said no. He speculated that they might have gotten on the list because they committed federal felonies. Some do have records. In Dear's case, he went to jail for ceremonially whacking an F-15 jet with a hammer in an act of civil disobedience.

But none of the people whose cases *In These Times* has examined had any history of violence that would suggest they might be a threat to airline safety. Indeed many, like Dear, are ardent pacifists. What they seem to share is opposition to the Bush administration's war policies and its attack on civil liberties.

So what is going on here?

Asked if the TSA has a second list, one not of the "threats to aviation" who would never be allowed to get on a plane, but rather of political activists who are to be singled out for intense scrutiny and interrogation, Steigman said, "I don't know. I'll have to look into that."

A day later, he came back with a curiously candid, if rather alarming, answer. "I checked with our security people," he said, "and they said there is no second list." Then, after a pause, he added, "Of course, that could mean one of two things: Either there is no second list, or there is a list, and they're not going to talk about it for security reasons."

Some of those who have been stopped for special scrutiny by TSA agents in recent months have been specifically told that their names were "on a list." Last spring, Virgine Lawinger, a 74-year-old nun and a member of Peace Action, was stopped at the Milwaukee airport along with some 20 other members of the group on their way to Washington to lobby the Wisconsin congressional delegation against military aid to Colombia. She says they were told at the time by local sheriff's deputies and Midwest Express ticketing personnel that one or several of them were "on a list," and that the TSA had instructed airport secu-

rity to keep the group off the plane.

Lawinger, with the help of the local ACLU, filed a Freedom of Information request with the TSA in early October, seeking to learn why she had been barred from her flight. A month later, word came back that the TSA had a file on her, though all the pages were withheld except for a copy of a news clipping from the local paper reporting on her experience at the airport. It isn't known whether the other information in Lawinger's TSA file contains information predating the airport incident.

Barbara Olshansky, assistant legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York, reports that she has been stopped and searched every time she has flown since 9/11. On three of those occasions, she was forced to pull down her pants in view of other travelers. One of those times, when she demanded to know why she was being singled out, the airline agent at the gate threatened to bar her from the plane if she raised a fuss and added brusquely, "The computer spit you out. I don't know why, and I don't have time to talk to you about it."

While few would object to the TSA's maintaining a properly compiled list of genuine "threats to aviation" or preventing such people from boarding planes, it would appear that such a "no fly" list is not the one leading to all the harassment of political activists, who, after all, usually do get to fly.

Nancy Chang, a senior litigation attorney at the CCR, who also has been singled out for searches and questioning at the airport, says the government is "leveraging legitimate air safety concerns into a program that targets law-abiding Americans for questioning and detention based on their political viewpoints."

Father Dear agrees. "I think what they are doing is harassing people who are opposing the war and publicly speaking out against administration policy," he says.

One hint that this may be what is going on was provided to the Green Party's Stuber. When the Secret Service agents called in by the TSA security guards arrived at Raleigh-Durham Airport to interrogate (and run a retina scan on) him, he says they came armed with a loose-leaf binder, which they left open near him as he was being questioned. On an open page, he claims he was able to discern a long list of progressive political organizations. Among those he was able to make out clearly on the list: the Green Party, Greenpeace, Earth First! and Amnesty International. Since his interrogation in October, Stuber, an art dealer, says he has been unable to get onto a plane.

Confirmation of a TSA travel blacklist is particularly troubling to civil-liberties advocates, because the names of people to be subjected to extra security investigation are being made available to private companies. Airline computers at airport boarding gates are flagging people. These lists are not being closely held within the national security or law-enforcement files, but are apparently being widely dispersed.

In fact, this seems to be the new privatization approach of the administration when it comes to Homeland Security. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the FBI made its list of people with even remote links to terrorism—having associated, perhaps inadvertently, with a terror suspect, for example—available to a wide range of private companies, from banks and rental-car companies to casinos.

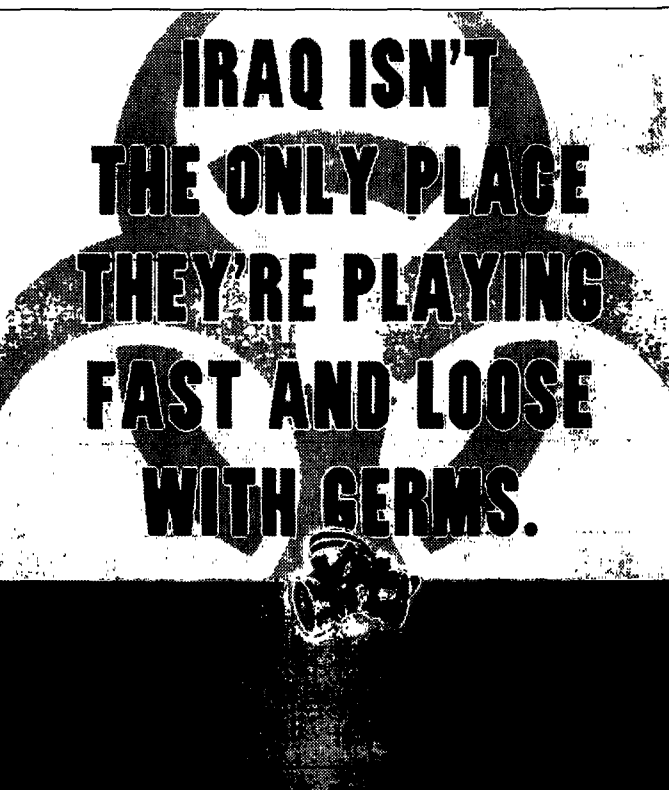
Says CCR's Olshansky: "It's bad enough when the federal government has lists like this with no guidelines on how they're compiled or how to use them. But when these lists are then given to the private sector, there are even less controls over how they are used or misused." Since airlines have always had the right to decide whether someone can board a plane, she observes that providing such a list to an airline represents a "tremendous chilling of the First Amendment right to travel and speak freely."

This week, the CCR announced that it is considering a lawsuit against the TSA. A number of those whose travel has been interfered with have signed on as possible plaintiffs, and CCR is inviting those with similar experiences to contact them (www.ccr-ny.org). Meanwhile, the ACLU has posted a no-fly complaint form to fill out on its Web site for those who are harassed or prevented from flying (www.aclu-wa.org/take_action/NoFlyList.html).

Calling the existence of such travel blacklists "an obvious and egregious violation of the First Amendment, because it permits both discrimination against a particular viewpoint and because it is a prior restraint on Americans' right to travel," CCR Legal Director William Goodman says, "the U.S. government appears to be targeting citizens because of their beliefs." ■

Dave Lindorff, a regular contributor to *In These Times*, is the author of *Killing Time*, a new book on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

IRAQ ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE THEY'RE PLAYING FAST AND LOOSE WITH GERMS.




At the Biologic Research Institute, the U.S. government is attempting to develop a strain of anthrax so dangerous it can resist vaccines. As reported in the *Bulletin*, the magazine of global security.

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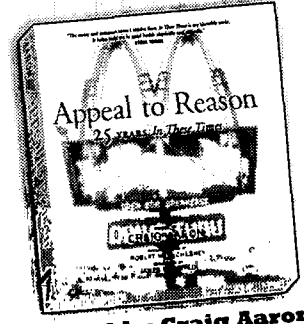
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The irony of the media-imposed label “anti-globalization” is that we in this movement have been turning globalization into a lived reality, perhaps more so than even the most multinational of corporate executives or the most restless of jet-setters. Globalization is not restricted to a narrow series of trade and tourism transactions. It is, instead, an intricate process of thousands of people tying their destinies together simply by sharing ideas and telling stories about how abstract economic theories affect their daily lives. This movement doesn’t have leaders in the traditional sense—just people determined to learn, and to pass it on.

Like others who found themselves in this global web, I arrived equipped with only a limited understanding of neoliberal economics, mostly how they related to young people growing up over-marketed and underemployed in North America and Europe. But I have been globalized by this movement: I have received a crash course on what the market obsession has meant to landless farmers in Brazil, to teachers in Argentina, to fast-food workers in Italy, to coffee growers in Mexico, to shantytown dwellers in South Africa, to telemarketers in France, to migrant tomato pickers in Florida, to union organizers in the Philippines, to homeless kids in Toronto, the city where I live.

A few months into George W. Bush’s “war on terrorism,” I realized that something had ended. Some politicians rushed to declare that what had ended was the movement itself: The concerns it raised about globalization’s failures are frivolous, they claimed, even fodder for “the enemy.” In fact, the escalation of military force and repression over the past year has provoked the largest protests yet on the streets of Rome, London, Barcelona and Buenos Aires. It also has inspired many activists, who had previously registered only symbolic dissent outside of summits, to take concrete actions to de-escalate the violence. These actions have included serving as “human shields” during the

standoff at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, as well as attempting to block illegal deportations of refugees at European and Australian detention centers.

But as the movement entered this challenging new stage, I realized I had been witness to something extraordinary: the precise and thrilling moment when the rabble of the real world crashed the experts-only club where our collective fate is determined.

A few months ago, while riffling through my column clippings searching for a lost statistic, I noticed a couple of recurring themes and images. The first was the fence. The image came up again and again: barriers separating people from previously public resources, locking them away from much-needed land and water, restricting their ability to move across borders, to express political dissent, to demonstrate on public streets.

Some of these fences are hard to see, but they exist all the same. A virtual fence goes up around schools in Zambia when an education “user fee” is introduced on the advice of the World Bank, putting classes out of the reach of millions of people. A fence goes up around the family farm in Canada when government policies turn small-scale agriculture into a luxury item, unaffordable in a landscape of tumbling commodity prices and factory farms. A fence goes up around clean water in South Africa when prices skyrocket owing to privatization, and residents are forced to turn to contaminated sources. And there is a fence that goes up around the very idea of democracy when Argentina is told it won’t get an International Monetary Fund loan unless it further reduces social spending, privatizes more resources and eliminates supports to local industries, all in the midst of an economic crisis deepened by those very policies.

Fences have always been a part of capitalism, the only way to protect property from would-be bandits, but the double standards propping up these fences have, of late, become increasingly bla-

Fences & Windows

Who are the real globalizers?

By Naomi Klein





Real fences, made of steel and razor wire, are needed to enforce the virtual ones.

tant. Expropriation of corporate holdings may be the greatest sin any socialist government can commit in the eyes of the international financial markets (just ask Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or Cuba's Fidel Castro). But the asset protection guaranteed to companies under free trade deals did not extend to the Argentine citizens who deposited their life savings in Citibank, Scotiabank and HSBC accounts and now find that most of their money has simply disappeared. Neither did the market's reverence for private wealth embrace the U.S. employees of Enron, who found that they had been "locked out" of their privatized retirement portfolios, unable to sell even as executives were frantically cashing in their own stocks.

The past decade of economic integration has been fueled by promises of barriers coming down, of increased mobility and greater freedom. And yet 13 years after the celebrated collapse of the Berlin Wall, we are surrounded by fences yet again, cut off—from one another, from the earth and from our own ability to imagine that change is possible.

The economic process that goes by the benign euphemism "globalization" now reaches into every aspect of life, transforming every activity and natural resource into a measured and owned commodity. As Hong Kong-based labor researcher Gerard Greenfield points out, the current stage of capitalism is not simply about trade in the traditional sense of selling more products across borders. It is also about feeding the market's insatiable need for growth by redefining as "products" entire sectors that were previously considered part of "the commons" and not for sale. The invading of the public by the private has reached into categories such as health and education, of course, but also into seeds, genes, ideas.

With copyright now the single-largest U.S. export (more than manufactured goods or arms), international trade law must be understood not only as taking down selective barriers to trade, but more accurately as a process that systematically puts up new barriers—around knowledge, technology and newly privatized resources. These are what prevent farmers from replanting their Monsanto-patented seeds and make it illegal for poor countries to manufacture cheaper generic drugs to get to their needy populations.

Globalization is now on trial because on the other side of all these virtual fences are real people, shut out of schools, hospitals, workplaces, their own farms, homes and communities. Mass privatization and deregulation have bred armies of locked-out people whose services are no longer needed, whose lifestyles are written off as "backward," whose basic needs go unmet. These fences of social exclusion can discard an entire industry, and they can write off an entire country, as has happened to

Argentina. In the case of Africa, essentially an entire continent can find itself exiled to the global shadow world, off the map and off the news, appearing only during wartime when its citizens are looked on with suspicion as potential militia members, would-be terrorists or anti-American fanatics.

In fact, remarkably few of globalization's fenced-out people turn to violence. Most simply move: from countryside to city, from country to country. And that's when they come face to face with the fences made of chain link and razor wire, reinforced with concrete and guarded with machine guns. Whenever I hear the phrase "free trade," I can't help picturing the caged factories I visited in the Philippines and Indonesia that are all surrounded by gates, watchtowers and soldiers—to keep the highly subsidized products from leaking out and the union organizers from getting in.

I think, too, about a recent trip to the South Australian desert where I visited the infamous Woomera detention center, a former military base that has been converted into a privatized refugee holding pen, owned by a subsidiary of the U.S. security firm Wackenhut. At Woomera, hundreds of Afghan and Iraqi refugees, fleeing oppression and dictatorship in their own countries, are so desperate for the world to see what is going on behind the fence that they stage hunger strikes, jump off the roofs of their barracks, drink shampoo and sew their mouths shut.

These days, newspapers are filled with gruesome accounts of asylum seekers attempting to make it across national borders by hiding themselves among the products that enjoy so much more mobility than they do. In December 2001, the bodies of eight Romanian refugees were discovered in a cargo container filled with office furniture; they had asphyxiated during the long journey at sea. The same year, the dead bodies of two more refugees were discovered in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in a shipment of bathroom fixtures. The year before, 58 Chinese refugees from Fujian province suffocated in the back of a delivery truck in Dover, England.

All these fences are connected: the real ones, made of steel and razor wire, are needed to enforce the virtual ones, the ones that put resources and wealth out of the hands of so many. It simply isn't possible to lock away this much of our collective wealth without an accompanying strategy to control popular unrest and mobility. Security firms do their biggest business in the cities where the gap between rich and poor is greatest—Johannesburg, São Paulo, New Delhi—selling iron gates, armored cars, elaborate alarm systems and renting out armies of private guards.

Brazilians, for instance, spend \$4.5 billion a year on private security, and the country's 400,000 armed rent-a-cops outnumber actual police officers by 3-to-1. In deeply divided South Africa, annual spending on private security has reached \$1.3 billion, more than three times what the government spends each

year on affordable housing. It now seems that these gated compounds protecting the haves from the have-nots are microcosms of what is fast becoming a global security state.

If this picture seems extreme, it may be only because most of us in the West rarely see the fences and the artillery. The gated factories and refugee detention centers remain tucked away in remote places. But over the past few years, some fences have intruded into full view—often, fittingly, during the summits where this brutal model of globalization is advanced. It is now taken for granted that if world leaders want to get together to discuss a new trade deal, they will need to build a modern-day fortress to protect themselves from public rage, complete with tanks, tear gas, water cannons and attack dogs.

When Quebec City hosted the Summit of the Americas in April 2001, the Canadian government took the unprecedented step of building a cage around not just the conference center, but the downtown core, forcing residents to show official documentation to get to their homes and workplaces. Another popular strategy is to hold the summits in inaccessible locations: the 2002 G-8 meeting was held deep in the Canadian Rockies, and the 2001 WTO meeting took place in the repressive Gulf state of Qatar, where the emir bans political protests. The “war on terrorism” has become yet another fence to hide behind, used by summit organizers to explain why public shows

of dissent just won’t be possible this time around or, worse, to draw threatening parallels between legitimate protesters and terrorists bent on destruction.

But what are reported as menacing confrontations are often joyous events, as much experiments in alternative ways of organizing societies as criticisms of existing models. The first time I participated in one of these counter-summits, I remember having the distinct feeling that some sort of political portal was opening up—a gateway, a window, “a crack in history,” to use Subcomandante Marcos’ beautiful phrase.

This opening had little to do with a broken window at the local McDonald’s, the image so favored by television cameras; it was something else: a sense of possibility, a blast of fresh air, oxygen rushing to the brain. These protests—which are actually week-long marathons of intense education on global politics, late-night strategy sessions in six-way simultaneous translation, festivals of music and street theater—are like stepping into a parallel universe. Overnight, the site is transformed into a kind of alternative global city where urgency replaces resignation, corporate logos need armed guards, people usurp cars, art is everywhere, strangers talk to each other, and the prospect of a radical change does not seem like an odd and anachronistic idea but the most logical thought in the world.

A Democratic Multitude

By David Graeber

FLORENCE, ITALY

Any way you measure it, November’s European Social Forum was a spectacular success. After the nightmare of the G-8 meetings in Genoa a year and a half before, the prospect of any large-scale convergence of globalization activists in Italy was a matter of widespread trepidation. Almost as soon as organizers named Florence as the location, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced that “police intelligence” had discovered that activists were planning to wreak widespread destruction in the ancient city. The announcement was backed up by an endless campaign of scaremongering on Italian TV and in print media, much of which is owned by Berlusconi.

The organizers—who had selected Florence partly because its citizens had just elected a radical mayor—demanded an audience with government ministers, where they presented a simple proposal: We are not intending violence or destruction, they said, but we are also determined to hold the forum in Florence, with permission or not. If police tried to shut it down by force, some activists would certainly defend themselves; it



was really up to the government whether they wanted there to be violence. So the government gave in. For the moment.

One might say that the idea of a Social Forum is to create a new conception of the public, not as voters or passive spectators, but as the kind of public that might exist in a truly free society. A “democratic multitude” is the currently popular phrase in Italy (it originally goes back to Spinoza). Instead of old-fashioned talk of “the masses,” with its implications of faceless uniformity—a sea of gray faces rallying behind some great leader or glued to some giant screen—“the multitude” is inherently heterogeneous, an endless colorful array self-organized groups converging for some purposes and going their separate ways for others.

Even the heavy-handed security measures have been co-opted by activists into part of the message: The fences that surround the summits become metaphors for an economic model that exiles bil-

Despite all the attempts at privatization, it turns out there are some things that don't want to be owned—music, water, seeds, electricity, ideas.

lions to poverty and exclusion. Confrontations are staged at the fence—but not only the ones involving sticks and bricks. Tear-gas canisters have been flicked back with hockey sticks, water cannons have been irreverently challenged with toy water pistols and buzzing helicopters mocked with swarms of paper airplanes. These activists are quite serious in their desire to disrupt the current economic order, but their tactics reflect a dogged refusal to engage in classic power struggles: Their goal is not to take power for themselves, but to challenge power centralization on principle.

Other kinds of windows are opening as well, quiet conspiracies to reclaim privatized spaces and assets for public use. Maybe it's students kicking ads out of their classrooms, or swapping music online, or setting up independent media centers with free soft-

ware. Maybe it's Thai peasants planting organic vegetables on over-irrigated golf courses, or landless farmers in Brazil cutting down fences around unused lands and turning them into farming co-operatives. Maybe it's Bolivian workers reversing the privatization of their water supply, or South African township residents reconnecting their neighbors' electricity under the slogan "Power to the People." And once reclaimed, these spaces are also being remade. In neighborhood assemblies, at city councils, in community-run forests and farms,

a new culture of vibrant direct democracy is emerging, one that is fueled and strengthened by direct participation, not dampened and discouraged by passive spectatorship.

Despite all the attempts at privatization, it turns out there are some things that don't want to be owned. Music, water, seeds, electricity, ideas—they keep bursting out of the confines erected around them. They have a natural resistance to enclosure, a tendency to escape, to cross-pollinate, to flow through fences, and flee out open windows. ■

Naomi Klein's new book is *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate*, where a longer version of this essay originally appeared.

Anti-war protesters at the European Social Forum in Florence, Italy. A peace march on November 9 drew as many as 1 million people.

The Social Forum was a place for such a multitude to converge: In this case, to imagine what Europe might look like if the principles underlying these groups were generalized. It would be, among other things, a Europe of open borders, networks of cooperative enterprises connected by complex systems of barter or social exchange, in which a massive diminution of certain forms of ecologically destructive consumerism would be compensated by guaranteed incomes, drastically reduced hours of work and frenetically intensified cultural production.

And the forum itself? Imagine if you will something halfway between a carnival and the largest academic conference in world history, with 60,000 delegates—but the average age was in the mid-twenties, and at least half the delegates sported dreadlocks, piercings or *kuffiyehs*. Ancient arsenals—all part of the Renaissance fortress in which the conference was held—were packed with audiences of up to 6,000, listening to discussions of the Argentine barter economy, strategies for civil disobedience, or the relation of sexuality and revolution. The whole event culminated on November 9 with one of the largest peace marches Europe has ever seen, an enormous festival of music and costumes that even the police estimated at 500,000; organizers claimed more than a million.

Without the support of the city government, Berlusconi and his allies were unable to manufacture another Genoa, and all the scare tactics came to nothing. There are dangers here, however. The main Italian organizers of the event were political parties like the Greens and Rifondazione Comunista, along with the Disobedienti (formerly Ya Basta!), which have been criticized for their reliance on top-

down organizational structures. They and reformist groups like the French ATTAC dominated the speeches and seminars; the anarchists and most other actual practitioners of self-organization found themselves exiled to the margins (the Italian Independent Media Center along with most anarchists ended up operating out of a space called the Hub half a mile away from the fortress).

Media campaigns endlessly represented them as the "violent fringe," although these were almost the only groups in attendance that rejected any idea of imposing their views by force. But that propaganda made it much easier for some on center stage—like Alex Callinicos of the British Socialist Workers Party—to lecture the crowds about how foolish and destructive it was to imagine there was ever something fundamentally new about the current movement (some nonsense about new organizational forms coming out of the Zapatistas, or whatever), insisting instead that the core of the movement has always been established labor unions and political parties. Those who would like to reduce us to faceless masses are never far away.

As if to highlight such dangers, almost as soon as the event was over, the government struck back, hauling off some 20 activists in raids all over Italy, accusing them of conspiring to disrupt the government during previous protests in Naples and Genoa. Organizers of events like the Social Forum must stand behind such people—and ultimately, that means not only demanding their release, but letting them into backrooms where agendas appear to be made or, better, democratizing the process altogether. No movement can survive if it allows itself to be cut off from the sources of its own creativity. ■

CORPORATE CULTURE IN *The Age of Enron*



Barbara Ehrenreich is a journalist and author whose recent books include *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* and *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*.



Thomas Frank is editor of *The Baffler* and author of *One Market Under God* and *The Conquest of Cool*.

A friend once told me, "thoughtful discussions are the dress rehearsals for creative and effective actions." So in times of confusion and crisis, we should not dismiss talk as cheap. On the contrary, talking is crucial. Last spring more than 200 people gathered at the Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago to participate in a panel discussion about the Enron crisis with Barbara Ehrenreich, Thomas Frank, Saskia Sassen and moderator Laura S. Washington. National media coverage of Enron was wide but not very deep. However, the panel and audience explored not only the details of corrupt practices, but causes, implications and possible solutions. This is precisely the kind of intellectual probing that *The Public Square*—a Chicago-based nonprofit that organized the event—hoped would occur. We were not so concerned with arriving at finite answers as we were with initiating a process of rigorous collective inquiry. We hope to expand the conversation by reprinting selections from that discussion here.

—Barbara Ransby, executive director of *The Public Square*

NASTY, BRUTISH AND SHORT SKIRTS

LAURA S. WASHINGTON: Are we in a post-Enron era? What lessons can we learn from this?

SASKIA SASSEN: I would say it's a little opportunity to do a bit of damage to a system that has allowed Enron to happen. But it would take a lot more work to get past the kind of culture that made Enron possible. What Enron makes clear to me is that in our system of law, the rule of law has hidden rules of permission that those with a lot of power can seize. On the other hand, there are no hidden rules protecting those who lack power.

WASHINGTON: Barbara Ehrenreich, you write a lot about the people on the bottom rung, the people who are not in corporate boardrooms. What are your reflections on the Enron debacle? Would you agree with Saskia Sassen's point about them not having access to the same sort of rules as the big guys?

BARBARA EHRENRICH: There are definitely different sets of rules. I went back today to read *Newsweek's* article on this sort of wonderful, frolicsome culture they had there at the top of Enron. You get the sense that these people operated with no rules in the large sense, and no rules in the small sense. And that's interesting, because the right has always talked about the liberal professoriate as being the place that was so degenerate and full of hedonism. Here we see at the top corporate levels there's this complete moral breakdown, as one of our right-wing moralists might put it.

Meanwhile at the bottom, the workplace is sort of this Calvinist-run dictatorship, where you have to take a personality test to get in to make sure you have no powers of independent thinking; you have to have a drug test to make sure you don't exercise those powers of independent thinking in some bad way; you have rules such as no talking to your fellow employees; you can be fired for anything; you're subject to surveillance; you have no privacy whatsoever. I find this a contrast that has echoes of ancient Rome with its sybaritic upper class supported by masses of people, serfs or slaves.

THOMAS FRANK: Can I pile on here? I was down in Houston writing a story about Enron for *The Nation*, and I went to a party for ex-Enron employees. These were guys who have lost their

jobs, and they're bitter as hell, right? And it was still this type of atmosphere. Obviously, it was downscaled. But when you walked into this bar, there was a woman in a bathing suit and a cowboy hat crouched over a giant tub of ice, and she would hand you a beer. And I said, this is kind of an unusual atmosphere for a party for guys that have been fired and laid off. But they were like, no, no, this is really normal. They thought this was just A-OK.

SASSEN: But I don't think that's Enron alone. I think that's corporate culture.

FRANK: If you read a guy like Thomas Friedman, he says that one of the things that defines America—that God wants every country to adopt in order to enter the New Economy—is a workplace where upper management has the power to be creative and have all sorts of wacky lifestyles (bring their pets to work, listen to rock 'n' roll while they trade, which is what they did at Enron headquarters) but workers have to be expendable. They have to be able to fire them at will for any reason. And this is what every country on earth is supposed to adopt, because we know it works so damn well here.

WASHINGTON: Saskia Sassen, you have done a lot of work outside this country and have seen the perspective of people across the globe. How is the Enron crisis viewed outside the United States?

SASSEN: There is a sense in which they are relishing this, because the pressure to become Americanized in their corporate culture is subsiding. That doesn't necessarily mean they are the good guys; they have their own ways. But I must say that, when comparing corporate cultures, the United States is the most brutal.

WASHINGTON: In terms of what?

SASSEN: Brutal in terms of the things that we have been talking about, about the workers, and also *vis-à-vis* the environment. British Petroleum has tried to be environmentally sensitive. They have, moreover, discovered that using these technologies is not only protecting the environment, but is actually equally profitable to being non-environmentally sensitive. Exxon: zero. They don't even talk about it. So there are many different ways in which corporate culture in America is a bit of the Wild West.

WORKERS WORLD

WASHINGTON: Barbara Ehrenreich, you've written extensively about the worker, lived with workers, and lived their lives through your book. Why is it that they don't rise up?

EHRENREICH: If you look like a troublemaker in any way, you're out. The workplace, especially the low-wage workplace (but it extends to a lot of mid-level people, too) is more like a dictatorship. You really check your civil rights at the door. You have no right to privacy, no freedom of speech or assembly or anything else. I'm referring to the research I did for my book, *Nickel and Dimed*, in which I took low-wage jobs and tried to support myself on them.

On day two at one of these jobs, a fellow worker warned me to watch out for what I had in my purse, because the manager could search it at any time. I thought, that can't be. That day I went home and called a friend who's a union organizer, and he said, yes, anything on the boss' property. ... If you can't carry union literature in your bag for fear of being searched, if you have a rule like no talking to your fellow employees except about an immediate work-related thing, it's not easy to organize at all.

WASHINGTON: What about the unions?

EHRENREICH: Unions are weak, and that's why I would say we have this Wild West atmosphere. There is no labor party, there's no social democratic tradition that has curbed these guys. It's bandit capitalism here.

I want to mention other examples of illegality. This is much less lurid than Enron, but Wal-Mart, which is one of the places that I worked, doesn't pay overtime. If you work beyond eight hours, you don't get time-and-a-half. When I was told this by another worker, I said, that's not legal. When I got home to my real life and researched that, sure enough, they don't pay overtime, and they have class action suits against them. You can do anything and wait until you're sued, and you've got all the money, you've got all the lawyers, so it doesn't matter if the workers sue you.



Saskia Sassen is the Ralph Lewis professor of sociology at the University of Chicago and the Centennial Visiting professor at the London School of Economics. Her most recent books are *Guests and Aliens* and the edited volume *Global Networks, Linked Cities*.



Laura S. Washington is a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times and former editor and publisher of The Chicago Reporter.

Ten thousand people a year in this country are fired for union activity—completely illegal. At Wal-Mart, there's a rule against saying "damn" or "hell" and some other words that I can't imagine saying. And the purpose of a rule like that is when they fire somebody, it may be for union activity, but they say it's because you said a bad word.

FRANK: Your book, Barbara, is very unusual ... to get a first-hand account of what it's like at the very bottom. But there's best-selling literature out there that tells us what being a manager is all about. It's about being sensitive, it's about listening, it's about tearing down hierarchy and making your workplace into a democracy, it's about a complete, 180-degree denial about the reality of corporate life. Tom Peters, for example, talks a lot about how women make better managers than men, and women are smarter than men, and so on, basically denying the reality of the corporate world.

WASHINGTON: Which is that women are not respected for their intelligence.

FRANK: Yeah, that's clearly the case. The glass ceiling and all that. But if you read the literature that the corporate people read when they're sitting on the plane, it completely denies that. The whole point of the literature is not to describe the world or to give you realistic hints about how to operate in the corporate world, but to idealize and legitimate the corporate world to everyone on the outside. Why is it OK for the corporation, which is so much more powerful than any other institution in our society, to run our lives? Because the corporation is a democracy that really cares about you.

The workplace, especially the low-wage workplace, is more like a dictatorship. You really check your civil rights at the door.

CORPORATE SOUL

AUDIENCE QUESTION: It seems to me that the function of the corporation in our society is really not just to make a profit, not just to make products, but very importantly to make jobs and income for ordinary workers. This needs to be recognized in the corporate charters. Also we need to think seriously about instituting some measure of democracy in the workplace, so workers and citizens can have a word in these corporations instead of being excluded from them.

EHRENREICH: The argument that corporations are supposed to be generating jobs for the rest of us is always made when you criticize corporations. It's very interesting to me that after 9/11, the government gave these huge amounts of money to the airline companies even as they laid off hundreds of thousands of workers.

FRANK: You say that the point of corporations is to provide us with jobs, and that's not the case according to management

theory. They go on about the "corporate soul." The corporation exists for its own sake; it answers to "the market." It doesn't answer to us. There's literature on this where the central idea is that the corporation is technically immortal.

QUESTION: I'm wondering if the panel might comment on the role that the *Wall Street Journal* plays in corporate culture.

FRANK: The *Wall Street Journal* is out there to constantly defend the corporation from any kind of attack. I should distinguish between its op-ed page and its reporting; its reporting is excellent. Its op-ed is really out there to run interference for the corporate world and to shoot down any critique before it can develop into something that might cost somebody some money. On Enron they have probably run 25 op-eds saying that Enron has nothing to do with the rest of the economy. They actually started going really hard on Ken Lay and Jeffrey Skilling and the rest of them; they want to make an example out of these guys. But at the same time, it's damage control.

QUESTION: The alternative media do a fairly good job of exposing corporate corruption, but most people are not consumers of alternative media. So do we need a reform of mainstream media to make the media more accountable? And how does the corporate culture of the mainstream media really foster the covering up of the kinds of things that are going at Enron and other corporations?

FRANK: At every newspaper in the country, when you have to cover an economic issue, you ask a Wall Street stock analyst covering the company. These are people with obvious anti-labor interests. The fact is that the mainstream media have a resolutely upper-middle class perspective. Even people who talk about "liberal bias" will admit that.

EHRENREICH: And of course there is zero coverage of non-affluent people, because these media outlets and magazines and newspapers are dependent on their advertisers for their revenue. Advertisers are interested in "good demographics," which means readers that have a lot of disposable income, and there is just no point in covering labor, poor people, welfare issues and so on.

THE ENRON ERA

QUESTION: Why would you think Enron is typical of American corporations? They were obviously doing something very different from almost every other corporation. It seems to be a mistake to try to hold them as the exemplar, when they look more like a cancer to me.

FRANK: They were thought to be the exemplar before the collapse. Enron's accounting practices are duplicated across the board. The K-Mart bankruptcy and the Global Crossing bankruptcy are related to what happened to Enron. The general fall-off in profits this quarter is because of Enron. You have to remember that what has happened to Enron in just the past few months has been extraordinary. No company has had anyone look at them that closely since the '30s.

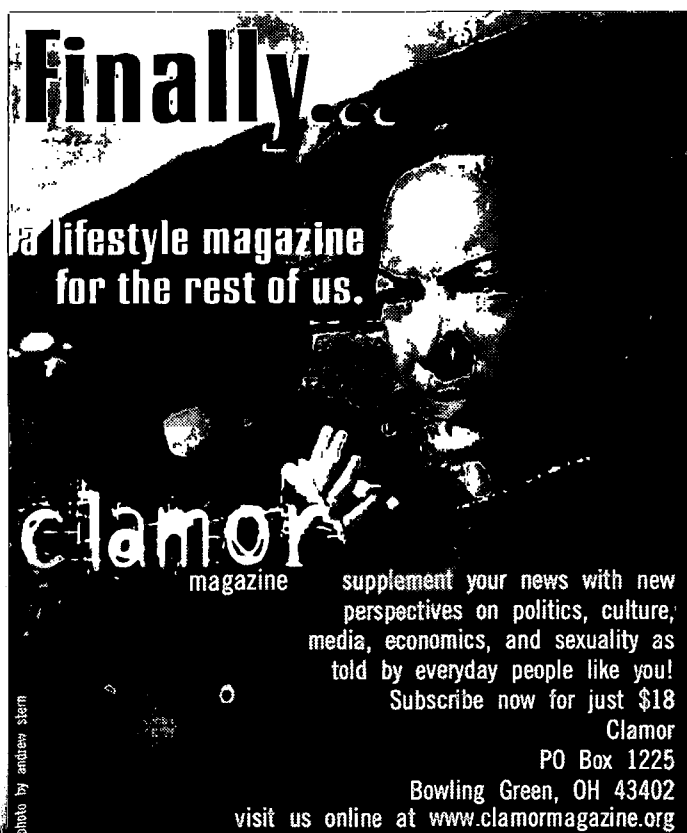
GE, another company that is revered by the investment community, lately got downgraded because, just like Enron, they had been suspiciously hitting their numbers right on the nose, every quarter for like the past 10 years. Once upon a time, this was regarded as a great thing. This is what you wanted, what you invested for. I can't answer for every company, but my suspicion is that Enron-like practices are very widespread.

SASSEN: There is something distinct about the current era, and Enron represents that. The big banks today are a different story than they were even five years ago. And our government has enabled that partly through legislation, by certain kinds of deregulation. Coming back to your point, the political system is deeply implicated in this. This is not just a question of the bad guys and the good guys.

EHRENREICH: For many CEOs, I'd say there's a similar mentality: "Let's get what I can. I might move on next year. I might be somewhere else. I not only have no loyalty to some particular product here, I have no particular loyalty to this corporation or anything else."

WASHINGTON: What message does that send to the workers?

EHRENREICH: They worry about a worker who might steal, maybe some of the little packets of jelly in a restaurant, who might pocket some saltines or something like that. Meanwhile, the corporate culture represented by the top at Enron, is one of looting: Get what you can. Get out with \$56 million, as some of these Enron people have, and then, "Let them try and catch me." ■



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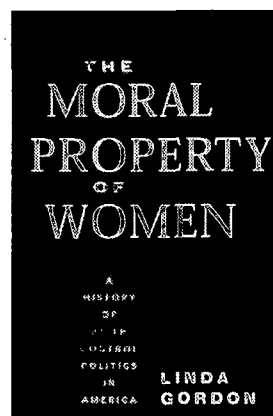
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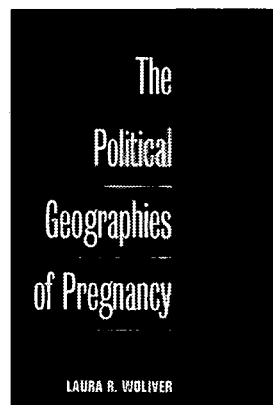


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The Slaves of Cambodia

Confronting the Southeast Asian sex trade

By Bill Myers

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

It's not yet 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon, but the teens in blue shirts have been sitting on Street 63 all day. They guard the rusted doors of a corrugated aluminum shack across from the Vietnamese coffee stands, scanning the crowds and street traffic. When they see a foreigner who looks lost, they spring into action.

"Hey, Monsieur," says a young boy with a shaved head and an eye blotted out by a pale, pink scar. "You want some fuck? Some boom-boom? Real cheap."

Spend any amount of time in Cambodia, and you'll pick up the price list quickly: Scotch runs about \$3 a glass; a two-bedroom apartment on the riverfront starts at \$250; a motorcycle with a decent-sized engine is about \$450; sex with a Vietnamese teen-ager will cost you around \$50. (Unless, of course, she's a virgin—in which case the price goes up to \$600.) You won't see this kind of tourism in the Angkor Wat brochures, but it's everywhere and doesn't even depend on foreign customers.

The trade in people, which once was just a small part of the general mish-mash of Third World "issues" that concerned international aid groups, has started to bring unwelcome but well-deserved global attention on Cambodia.

Earlier this year, one of the first girls ever to testify against her alleged trafficker—who allegedly kidnapped her from Vietnam,

moved her through Cambodia and onto the casinos at Macao—was herself charged with illegal immigration. The judge in her case, perhaps feeling benevolent, acquitted both her and the alleged trafficker. She has since disappeared.

In June, the police unit that had been created (with much fanfare and international aid money) to fight traffickers rescued 14 Vietnamese women and girls from the Svay Pak brothel district north of Phnom Penh—and promptly charged them with illegal immigration. A judge convicted 10 of the women and girls earlier this year and ordered them deported. The four acquitted girls were handed over to aid agencies.

A week after those convictions, the same anti-trafficking unit made another raid, this time rescuing 17 women and girls. They did not bother charging the young prostitutes, but merely deported the "aliens" and handed the rest over to an aid agency, where most of the girls' and women's families have reclaimed them and sent them back into the brothels.

Even though sex trafficking has been acknowledged as a problem in Cambodia for years, these cases have stunned women's rights advocates here. "It shows the task before us is enormous," says Mu Sochua, the Cambodian minister of women's affairs. The Cambodian government drafted a new anti-trafficking law in the wake of this summer's bad publicity, but it remains dormant.

Vietnamese women and girls from the Svay Pak brothel district wait outside a Phnom Penh courthouse, where they were charged with illegal immigration.

For the past decade, global trafficking rings have been tending Cambodia's fertile ground, taking advantage of both bigotry—in the form of virulent and often violent anti-Vietnamese racism—and poverty to make Cambodia a new keystone in the world's flesh trade, both as a destination and as a stopover. If the news is bleak, however, many observers remain hopeful partly because Cambodia is a small enough country to take on the traffickers.

Speaking at a news conference in August, Mary Robinson, then the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, called Cambodia a test case for anti-trafficking efforts. Unlike many nations, Cambodia has already signed onto international protocols against trafficking. "In comparison to some of [its] neighbors, Cambodia has a manageable size and population and could get on top of this," Robinson said.

According to U.N. statistics, more than 200,000 women and children are trafficked in Southeast Asia every year, out of at least 700,000 trafficking victims worldwide. "It's much wider than Cambodia," says Pierre Legros, an official with the anti-trafficking group Acting for Women in Distressing Circumstances (or AFE-SIP, its French acronym). "It's a global problem and has to be understood as such in order to find a global solution."

Although sometimes kidnapped, victims are also sold by their desperately poor families. While girls end up in the sex trade, many boys are also trafficked, usually as workers. In this region of Asia, most people live on less than a dollar a day. Mired in civil war up until a decade ago, Cambodia only recently has been confronted with the booming flesh trade, and the crisis has caught even earnest officials off-guard.

Moreover, Cambodia is a special case for many observers, partly because of its central location for Asian trafficking rings, and also because, more than any other state, it is a product of international aid. The United Nations took over the country for two years in 1992 and rebuilt its laws and institutions from the bottom up. Today, Phnom Penh is still home to hundreds of aid agencies, pouring millions of dollars into remaking a country nearly destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. This legacy has put the spotlight on the country and magnified the trafficking problem.

The U.N. nation-building mission here has influenced human trafficking in two ways. First, U.N. soldiers and aid workers who flocked to the country in the early '90s lived large off hefty per diems, and the brothel business exploded (along with the AIDS and HIV rate). Brothels existed before, but most experts say it was the U.N. mission that changed prostitution in Cambodia from a small, provincial problem into a mega-business. Second, Cambodia is simply a victim of its own liberalizing success. "It's an open country," Legros says. "You can do what you want."

One example: When the home computer of expatriate British schoolmaster John Keeler was seized during his arrest two years ago, it was found to have a series of e-mail messages to and from foreign pedophiles, one of whom asked for contact with "people which [sic] know the special business in sex life" in Cambodia. Keeler later became one of the first foreigners tried and convicted of "debauchery" in Cambodia, but the amount of "sex-pats" streaming into the country hasn't ebbed, experts say. (It's still possible to go to Manhattan's nightclub in Phnom Penh, for instance, and buy drinks for the Western aid workers clinging to young Vietnamese "taxi girls.")

Cambodia is also strategically located. Vietnamese girls, often sold into the sex trade because of their light skin and slim builds, move through Cambodia's porous borders, winding up either in the country's teeming brothels or picking up phony paperwork before heading on to Bangkok, Macao, Taipei and points further west. The U.S. State Department estimates up to 50,000 trafficking victims enter America every year, but Legros says that is "probably an underestimation." The phony passports are a real boon, Legros adds, because even if the women and girls are deported from Third World countries, they are sent back to Cambodia—and into the waiting arms of their traffickers.

Cambodia's Ministry of Justice has proposed a new law proponents say will close loopholes—by carefully defining trafficking and traffickers, and delineating in more specific terms what "debauchery" means under the law—and finally crack down on sex trafficking. But even supporters concede the road ahead is daunting. "It's important to have a legal framework," Robinson told reporters in August. "It's much more important to have implementation. The corruption, if it is not checked more, will really seriously erode Cambodian society."

Fighting trafficking means battling not only the grinding poverty that makes it so appealing, but entrenched cultural attitudes. "We have to see trafficking as a societal problem," Legros says. "And we have to see it as a whole society."

That includes Western "Asian fetishes," to be sure, but it also means Cambodian culture. In Khmer-language slang, for instance, the loss of virginity makes a woman or girl "broken." Women and girls are sometimes referred to as "silk," i.e., ruined when stained once. Men—whose frequent visits to brothels are seen merely as an unfortunate consequence of arranged marriages—are referred to as "gold," which is to say that wetting it only makes it shine brighter.

That kind of chauvinism, activists and officials say, must change. "Cambodian men must no longer seek sexual gratification with young girls," Robinson said. "It's necessary that there's a cultural change as rapidly as possible. ... It must become socially unacceptable for a Cambodian man to have sex with girls 8, 9, 10, 11, under 16, under 18. While the demand continues, the trafficking of young girls will continue."

For those fighting to turn the tide, the summer's events have proven just how daunting the challenge is—and given activists a new sense of their mission. "Our duty is to protect victims' rights, get them out of the system and provide them justice," Mu Sochua says. "And I think it has brought more and more of us together." ■

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Why Hitchens Matters

By Ian Williams

Christopher Hitchens explains *Why Orwell Matters*, and does so with feeling. One can see that he identifies strongly with his countryman, the socialist daring to stand up against double-think and prepared to think and speak thoughtcrime against the orthodox. The identification is not totally misplaced. The would-be Big Brothers on the left have

Why Orwell Matters
By Christopher Hitchens
Basic Books
211 pages, \$24

indeed vilified Hitchens for several years now for daring to question the lines they laid down on. The interesting question, made even more topical by his recent defection from *The Nation*, is whether Hitchens himself has broken under this intellectual torture and deserted the cause of a humane and democratic socialism.

An earlier generation on the left used Israel as their excuse to defect and become neoconservative: There are some disturbing indications that Hitchens' disillusion with some of the left has him veering toward Israel, from his recent comments that one of the reasons for supporting the Bush *drang nach* Baghdad is that it would cut off support for some of the more thuggish elements around Arafat. This may be true, but the most thuggish elements around Arafat at the moment are Sharon and his ilk.

In 1984, Goldstein's heretical text read: "In the general hardening of outlook that set in round about 1930, practices which had been long abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years—imprisonment without trial, the use of war prisoners as slaves, public executions, torture to extract confessions, the use of hostages, and deportation of whole populations—not only became common again, but tolerated and even defended by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive."

Orwell wrote this in the aftermath of Spain, Manchuria and World War II, and while Stalin continued to use the techniques he had perfected at home to seize Eastern Europe. The horrifying thing about the turn of the millennium is that there are still apologists for all these practices and more.

They span the whole traditional political spectrum. On the establishment side, there has been toleration for death squads in Central and Latin America; on the left, apologetics for ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and users of poison gas in Iraq. The Khmer Rouge found support from both the left and the right as a stick to beat the Soviets and Vietnamese; while recently both right isolationists and alleged left

who are now his detractors and, one regrets to say, even some who would see themselves as his supporters.

After the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party confirmed what Orwell and others had said about Stalin, leading British Communist theoretician R. Palme Dutt was asked why he had not mentioned these details in his constant praise of the alleged socialism of the USSR. "I never said there were no spots on the sun," he replied.

You can see why such people hate Orwell for depicting just how in reality the sun was eclipsed with mass terror. He was never forgiven for being so accurate about the nature of totalitarianism even when it donned a red fig leaf. Hitchens robustly defends the "List," a catalogue of people who Orwell thought were not suitable writers to be employed by a British Social Democratic government agency, which brought some of the Big Fraternity to apoplexy.

If anything, Hitchens understates the defense here. Orwell escaped from Spain with the KGB on his tail; other independent socialists were not so lucky. Stalin was an ally of Hitler for two years of war, during which German Communists and socialists met their end. Victory in Eastern Europe led to a purge of socialists

across the region—and people are angry that Orwell compiled a list of fellow travelers, most of whom would, on the evidence of their previous work, have found excuses for his liquidation if he had been late leaving Spain!

Indeed, there are portions of the book where one feels the need to spring to the defense of Orwell against Hitchens, such as the persistent insinuation that Orwell was a Trotskyist, whether he knew it or not, and that his ire was reserved for "Stalinism." In fact, Orwell called it "Communism" and, as Hitchens himself admits, saw the line of succession from Lenin and Trotsky to Stalin. In *Animal Farm*, Lenin and Trotsky



anti-imperialists found common cause in defending Slobodan Milosevic.

Orwell would have berated them all—just as Hitchens has honorably done, too, although with an increasing intemperance that hints at a shared polemical heritage with his detractors.

On reading Hitchens' defense, my first reaction was almost "why bother," since the direction and motivation of Orwell's detractors is so clear. In any event, Hitchens correctly shows that Orwell matters because he was so accurate in his depiction of so many of the people

are rolled into one exiled pig for just that reason. Hitchens quotes Orwell as feeling that "something like" the purges was "implicit in Bolshevik rule."

There is a conflict here between Hitchens' intellectual honesty and his nostalgia for Trotsky, whose record while in power in the Soviet Union showed no signs of overly deep attachment to democracy or human rights. Hitchens' introduction claims that the three great subjects of the 20th century were fascism, imperialism and "Stalinism." In fact, looking at Orwell's work, the one subject is totalitarianism, which encompasses clogged rivers in Rwanda, death squads in Central America—and Leninism in all its forms.

But why go on about Trotskyism in 57 varieties? Well, there are two reasons. One is that I suspect Hitchens' residual adherence to it has distorted some of his analysis of where Orwell stands in the socialist tradition. While he establishes firmly that Orwell is in that tradition, and remained so until he died, Hitchens underestimates the homegrown influences on Orwell. Throughout the '30s, the large cooperative movement, and even some of the unions in Britain, considered the dangers of state control and centralization before Hayek ever put pen to paper on the subject.

Hitchens mentions the Independent Labour Party, which was a Marxist-leaning but non-Leninist body with its own traditions of activism and militancy. It was Orwell's political home until it and he rejoined the Labour Party, which he supported even in government. It is fashionable among many on the American left to mock the achievements of British Labour. But when the American left builds large unions committed to socialism, has legislated universal health care, pretty much free education at all levels, and the type of social benefits that remain in Britain even after Thatcher, maybe their mockery will have more substance.

The other reason for dwelling on Hitchens' roots has nothing to do with Orwell. In the Trotskyist/Leninist milieu where Hitchens has spent so many years, the polemical approach takes no prisoners. Luckily, Trotsky's followers have not had the power of life and death for some time. The reason for that is the same reason we should rejoice that it is so. The concept of "thoughtcrime" in active use

has meant that expulsions or splits afflict any section of the Fourth International whose membership looms much above the high three figures. Every week is "Hate Week" in the sects.

In his enjoyable and generally accurate literary eviscerations of the likes of Bill Clinton, Henry Kissinger and Mother Teresa, Hitchens shows few signs of human sympathy. This is most un-Orwellian. We almost like O'Brien in 1984, and we feel for the apparatchiks who do Big Brother's work. Hitchens himself shows that Orwell went out of his way to defend and maintain friendly relations with people he disagreed with, sometimes profoundly.

My worry is that Hitchens' time in the Fourth International dimension has affected his sense of relativity so that the constant ad-hominem attacks on him, which are indeed often of the specious sort leveled at Orwell, may have driven him into a political form of "synecdochism"—taking the part for the whole. The would-be Big Brotherhood who have reviled him may manufacture more vitriol than the real left, but they do not represent it. I suspect that a majority of *Nation* readers might actually agree with him most of the time.

Hitchens is right about the nature of the Iraqi regime, but I'd like to see a little more ambivalence from him about signing up for the obsessive crusade against it. Quite what motivates the Bush hawks' quasi-theological obsession with Iraq is a mystery to most observers—but looking at the personnel, from Sharon to Rumsfeld, surely no one believes that concern for the Iraqi people or the spread of democracy is one of their motives.

I invite Hitchens to read his own book, where he praises Orwell for his realization that there was no facile analogy with appeasement when he resisted suggestions for a quick war against Stalin's Russia. With *Animal Farm* already out, and 1984 in preparation, he points out that Orwell opposed what could have been a successful—if bloody—attempt to overthrow a tyrannical evil regime guilty of monstrous crimes against its own people and its neighbors.

The left needs contrarians: It doesn't need neo-neocons while the original breed have so much power in the White House. So I hope Hitchens sticks around. Orwell did. ■

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The Undiscovered Country

By James North

No honest person who supports Israel's present government will be able to read this extraordinary book and not change his or her mind.

The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent

Edited by Roane Carey and Jonathan Shainin

The New Press
208 pages, \$22.95

Twenty-eight Israelis, with honesty and eloquence, say things you will almost never hear in the mainstream American press. This indispensable collection should become part of the great historic literature of dissent and humanity, right alongside the texts of the American civil rights movement and the resistance to South African apartheid.

Many of these 28 Israelis are not marginal dissidents, but figures from the very heart of national life. Michael Ben-Yair was the nation's attorney general, and Meron Benvenisti was deputy mayor of Jerusalem. Avi Shlaim and Tom Segev are prominent historians. David Grossman is a well-known writer, and Yitzhak Laor is an established poet. Amira Hass, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, and Gideon Levy are journalists with *Ha'aretz*, which is not an alternative publication but the *New York Times* of Israel (available online in English). Perhaps the most surprising contributor of all, Ami Ayalon, was the head of Shin Bet, Israel's security service.

These Israelis will shock anyone who relies only on the American press. They state with complete conviction that the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the illegal settlement of several hundred thousand Israelis there, is the primary cause of the second *intifada*, or uprising, which broke out in September 2000. Many of them use the word "apartheid" to describe Israeli policy. Ayalon says flatly: "Yasser Arafat neither prepared nor triggered the *intifada*. The explosion was spontaneous, against Israel, as all hope for the end of the occupation disappeared, and against the Palestinian Authority, its corruption, its impotence. Arafat could not repress it."

These Israelis do not trust Ariel Sharon and insist he does not want peace. Shlaim, the historian, says, "The hallmarks of his career are mendacity, the most savage brutality toward Arab civilians, and a persistent preference for force over diplomacy to solve political problems." Dr. Yigal Shochat, a war hero and a former fighter pilot, says the present Israeli air strikes against densely populated Palestinian cities are "the deliberate killing of civilians—a war crime."

Shulamit Aloni, a civil rights leader and former government minister, is just as blunt and eloquent: "Whoever says that this government is committing crimes against humanity is not an anti-Semite but an honest and humanist person."

Perhaps the most moving voices in the book belong to the refuseniks, the Israeli reserve officers and soldiers who will no longer serve in the occupation army. Neve Gordon (a frequent contributor to *In These Times*) writes a powerful open letter to a paratroop colonel he once admired, which ends by asking him: "Aviv, what happened to the sensible and judicious officer? How did you become a war criminal?"

Assaf Oron, a reserve sergeant major, courageously tells painful truths about how participating in the occupation army transformed him into someone he came to hate. "I tore up the personal documents of [Palestinian] men my father's age," he says. "I hit, harassed, served as a bad example." His "nausea and shame" grew until he became one of the first 50 reserve officers (the total has reached nearly 500) to sign the now famous January 2002 letter of refusal. Like some other contributors, he uses the language of the Torah to pass judgment; he calls Israel's present policy "idolatry in disguise."

The contributors are pessimistic in the short term. Gideon Levy warns: "All the injustices and evil perpetrated against the Palestinians will eventually blow up in our faces. A people that is abused in this way for years will explode one day in a terrible fury, even worse than what we see now."

The contributors all agree that the Bush administration promotes Sharon's intransigence. Baruch Kimmerling, a sociology professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, charges: "The United States government, as Israel's patron, bears full responsibility, not only for the recent escalation but for the coming bloodshed as well."

"I accuse everyone—mainly the majority of Jewish intellectuals in Israel and the United States—who sees and knows these things of doing nothing to prevent the impending catastrophe,"



Israeli peace activists: under the gun.

Kimmerling concludes. But not before adding, "and I accuse myself of knowing all this, yet crying little and keeping quiet too often." ■

James North (jamesnorth@mail.com) has reported for *In These Times* from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia since 1977. His great-grandfather, Rabbi Joseph Augustowsky, and his great-grandmother, Celia Sharkey, emigrated from Lithuania to Chicago in 1890.

The Subject Was Orchids

By Joshua Rothkopf

Let a great adenoidal whine spread out across the land: A new comic hero for the neurotic has arrived, and his name is Charlie Kaufman. Kaufman is, in fact, a real person, a Hollywood screenwriter of no small renown. His first produced script, *Being*

Adaptation
Directed by Spike Jonze

John Malkovich, inspired equal parts awe and concern; there was the obvious kinship with dementia, with monkeys and with that other famous Kaufman from outer space. But with *Adaptation*, he really pours himself onto the page, turning a serious case of writer's block into a rather public form of therapy. From womblike blackness, we hear the panicky first words of his main character, and we already know his name: "Do I have an original thought in my head?" Welcome to meta.

This might be just what the doctor ordered, but not Kaufman's producers, who were by all accounts expecting a faithful version of Susan Orlean's elegant nonfiction, *The Orchid Thief*, an inexplicably hot property for an abstract rumination on flowers. (How Kaufman landed the tony assignment in the first place is a mystery worthy of a prequel.) While I haven't read the book, for once I'm sure it really doesn't matter. Does Orlean include scenes of her ravishment by a balding, fortyish screenwriter? Thought not. "Whittle it down," she coos, straddling him, and it's clear *Adaptation* has little to do with fidelity to the text, strict or otherwise.

Or does it? Much of the payoff of Kaufman's gamble, once you get past the initial shock, comes with its savvy suggestion that the loneliness of a Hollywood schlub might have more in common with Orlean's imperious detachment than one would initially think. He's picked up on something longing and unrequited in

Orlean's relationship with her gregarious subject, John Laroche, an obsessive clipper of rare orchid species. Wading into swamplands behind him, she seems to have coveted his passion. Kaufman seizes on this with the desperation of a drowning man; part of the fun of this creative hijacking comes from his sexing up of Orlean's hoity-toity *New Yorker* universe.

But I get ahead of myself. First there's the schlub. Great beads of floss sweat form on his jowly face, and you wince with the realization that it's Nicolas Cage. With any luck, this manic actor will go on to promised greatness; his career has slipped

Laroche materializes (Chris Cooper), casually charming and driven, but something of a footnote in his own story. Maybe it's because he's the one character who has this adaptation thing figured out, flicking from one super-advanced hobby to the next—orchids, turtles, mirror collecting—with the blink of an eye. In a way, he's the most boring. Bring on the writers.

There's no good reason why this should work—the picture is a schizy, self-indulgent mess—but magically, it does. It's too early to tell what kind of director Spike Jonze is; his only other work is *Malkovich* and before that, some marvelous music videos, one of which featured Christopher Walken's best performance in years. But I'm already willing to credit him with a veteran's restraint: Jonze knows not to trick up Kaufman's lunacy with camera shenanigans. He goes instead for that wobbly faux-realism, of which I'm generally not a fan. Jonze makes it work though, and his contribution is key: Kaufman's ideas risk preciousness without such a counterweight. (I shudder to imagine them working apart.)



The odd couple.

of late into mawkishness. But for now, Charlie is his most brilliant comic creation to date—quite an achievement if your credits include *Raising Arizona*. Charlie types in a tortured hunch, his desk an inverted bridge chair with a dented cliplight hanging off it; we cut to Orlean's palatial study, all harmonious horizontals broken only by her erect posture (Meryl Streep rebounds here as well), and an odd couple is born.

Adaptation isn't all pillow talk, though those are its best parts. It does get around to *The Orchid Thief*, interrupting its fidgety flow for droll sequences of bees copulating with like-striped petals and an absurd moment with Charles Darwin who, in Kaufman's imagining, writes by candlelight with a skull on his desk. (He's some kind of evolutionary Hamlet.) A John

Orlean and Laroche chasing Charlie down with a shotgun. He's got company though: his twin brother Donald (Cage again, effortlessly), whose baser aspirations for a script sale ("My genre is thriller," he chirps. "What's yours?") send the third act spiraling into delirious cliché. *Adaptation* owes a lot to Donald, too much to spoil, and I've saved him for last because he's Kaufman's sweetest invention—a goofy angel who ends up solving the movie. He also gets Kaufman's best line, a bruised retort to Charlie's savaging of his idiotic serial-killer script: "Mom called it 'psychologically taut.'" No Kaufman would ever suffer such banal praise in reality, and for that we should be eternally grateful. ■

Joshua Rothkopf can be reached at rothkopf@inthesetimes.com.

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cut you OFF.
Now, How MAY
I HELP you?

12-6

Nicole Hollander



Continued from back cover

The book was drawn entirely with a knife on black scratchboard, highlighted with watercolors for dreamy bluish hues. Bright colors are intersected sparingly for special effect, as with the red blood of her period, and the yellow wailing of the saxophone. Drooker says that the girl's menstrual blood, referred to in the title, is an especially important part of the story's symbolism and place in literary tradition.

"It means that now she's ready to embark on this journey, it's a classic literary device," he says, noting that a girlfriend had the idea that the dog would likely be the first one to notice this sign of the girl's womanhood. "Usually it's done more subtly, like Snow White pricking her finger or Dorothy's ruby red slippers. Even Alice in Wonderland and Cinderella, there's always something about puberty and coming into womanhood as a subtext."

The Wizard of Oz was a definite inspiration for Blood Song, Drooker says. He adapts the same girl-and-dog motif, and like Dorothy, the girl's adventure begins after her family is destroyed. "Fairy tales and mythology really repeat themselves," he says. "I wanted this to be in the tradition of the heroine, the odyssey, even down to using classical motifs like the moon, water, the boat. There is symbolism all over the place. Then where it's really anchored in contemporary reality is the fact that it's not a tornado, but the military that kills her parents."

Though the girl's homeland isn't specified, it could easily be Chiapas, Colombia, Cambodia, Vietnam or any lush, undeveloped country where military helicopters have descended on the peasantry population. Once she gets to the city, the girl finds the global struggle for land and dignity repeated in a microcosm, as street musicians struggle to be able to practice their art, and squatters demand a place to live.

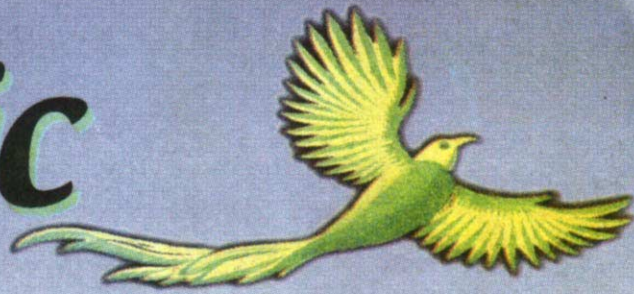
"I can relate to the experience of the street musician," Drooker says, referring to time he spent selling his work on the sidewalks of New York. "I was always playing this cat-and-mouse game with the police, always having to pack up quickly and move on. Then you got the [Mayor Rudy] Giuliani zero tolerance, where he's saying being a street musician is a quality of life crime." He calls the city in Blood Song a "generic 21st-century city, really a police state, a George Orwell dystopia with hidden cameras everywhere."

While much of Drooker's work is highly political, he sees that more as an extension of his person than as an obligation for all artists. "If you feel strongly about the colors of the sun on a haystack, you do that," he says. "If you feel passionate about politics and raising consciousness, you do that. Pictures are a language for what you feel."

Kari Lydersen is a reporter at the Washington Post Midwest bureau and an instructor in the Urban Youth International Journalism Program.



Fantastic Voyage



By Kari Lydersen

From old Chinese folk tales to *The Wizard of Oz*, it is a classic tale told a million different ways through the ages: A young person sets out on her own to make her way in the world, conquers obstacles in her path, and finds her own sense of strength and courage in the process. For our own troubled times, artist and activist Eric Drooker adds his poignant and inspiring *Blood Song* to this vast and varied body of literature.

Blood Song, told entirely through pictures with no captions or dialogue, is a tale of a young girl torn from an idyllic life in an undeveloped tropical country. When her father is killed in a military invasion—it's never explicit exactly which military, or even where she lives—the young woman flees the cruel, stone-faced soldiers through the forest, accompanied by her trusty dog, until she finds a rowboat on the ocean. She rows and rows, encountering many challenges on the high seas, eventually landing in an unnamed big city reminiscent of New York.

Drooker, the author of another "silent novel," *Flood*, is well known for his politically charged work. Some of it is collected in *Street Posters and Ballads*, which is filled with images of clashes with police, squatters' struggles, protests and prisoners. In *Blood Song*, he combines an overall political awareness with a more personal and timeless tale. "There are various themes here, militarism, the global economy, police brutal-

ity, the environment, which I hadn't dealt with much before," he says, walking through a gallery of Dutch masters, some of his favorites, at the Art Institute of Chicago.

While *Flood*, a semi-autobiographical work, took place completely in the urban jungle of New York, *Blood Song* dwells in the realm of nature, even once the girl reaches the city. Drooker attributes this shift partly to his move to the Bay Area five years ago after spending almost his whole life in Manhattan.

"San Francisco is still a city, but living there feels like the Amazon compared to New York," he says. "I feel like I'm living in this humongous paradise with palm trees and hummingbirds all around. In Manhattan, I felt like I was suffocating, literally. I needed a different landscape, and all of this influenced my work. I was really enjoying drawing organic shapes, vegetation, animals."

As in *Flood*, the new novel depicts the image of the primitive in the city, as well as primitiveness in urban life as a whole. The heroine lands barefoot, bewildered and dripping wet in the city, having survived storms, whirlpools and hunger on the way across the sea. She sees a street musician being hassled by the police as he wails on his saxophone. She befriends him.

Impulses take over, and soon the couple are having sex on a rooftop, passionately conceiving a child. After tear-gas-filled battles with police, imprisonment and other urban adventures, the story comes full circle: While at the start the girl had been sleeping outside among thatched huts and birds, in the end she is sleeping on the roof with the stars above her and pigeons all around.

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Illustrations by Eric Drooker
from *Blood Song*

